



# ANNUAL REPORT

New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

FISCAL YEAR 2024

# Annual Report

## *Fiscal Year 2024*

### Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Director.....	3
Letter from the Chair.....	7
Agency Overview.....	9
NMCDHH Activities During FY24.....	10
Legislative Performance Measures.....	13
NMCDHH Outreach FY24.....	16
Programs & Services	
Community Advocacy.....	18
Support Service Provider Program.....	37
Telecommunications and Outreach.....	40
Community Engagement.....	44
Organizational Chart.....	56
Staff Members.....	57
Board of Commissioners.....	65
Budget.....	68
Community Member Statistics.....	69
Contact Information.....	71



# Letter from the Executive Director

*G. Nathan Gomme*

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Governor of New Mexico  
State Capitol Building  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Suite 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Madame Governor,

The State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides effective leadership, education, advocacy and a variety of programs to reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural and intellectual well-being of Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf with additional disabilities and Hard of Hearing New Mexicans and their families, friends and colleagues.

Throughout the year the team here at the Commission worked to address several areas of advocacy and services in the state. We worked to enhance the experiences in our medical facilities throughout the state, joining in a dialogue with members of our community and medical staff, to improve communication access throughout the various levels in an individual's medical experience. Joining key leaders, we hosted joint listening sessions to discuss sign language access and captioning access from top to bottom. We discussed the increasingly capable captioning tools utilizing artificial intelligence, as well as tools and best practices when using remote interpreting services. We worked with emergency providers, such as law enforcement, to continue working on best practices in situations where communication access can be a precarious barrier to outcomes. We addressed the need for effectively contacting emergency services through various tools, which include an app such as AccesSOS, which was launched for use in the Bernalillo and Santa Fe areas. We continued to improve outcomes for our new ASL interpreters in the state with workshops and apprentice opportunities. We also worked to add a necessary but overlooked program into the state, a Communication Facilitator (CF) Program, as we become the fourth state in the nation providing a bridge in remote communication for our DeafBlind and Deaf with additional disabilities community.

Part of our work this year included filling vacant positions to enhance outcomes throughout the state. We filled positions with individuals who bring experience with Artificial Intelligence (AI), communication access, the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), and budget. These filled positions enable our agency to continue its work, addressing the needs of New Mexicans. In addition, our agency partnered with several other state and local agencies as well as local organizations. Working with a service

provider like AccesSOS, who created an app that streamlines communication access for our community, meant that we were the second state to have such a program developed by persons who are in our community. We connected AccesSOS to community leaders such as the Hearing Loss Association of America's (HLAA's) chapters in New Mexico as well as the New Mexico Association for the Deaf (NMAD). Putting organizations together increases awareness and partnership in educating our community. Our critical vendors who provide relay services and equipment worked with our offices and new members to develop new plans and concepts that will better educate the community on technology trends and the continued transition of relay services from analog to digital services. Our newly filled positions have taken trainings and brought resources that will help us pave the way to a robust and progressive technology plan for the foreseeable future. Our involvement in discussions of Deaf-based AI ensures a continued involvement in the appropriate and safe use of tools that will likely improve the lives of several New Mexicans. Such involvement will mean a keen knowledge on what is coming next and provide an opportunity to test the many beta programs that we are seeing on the horizon. In order to continue that work, we look to improving the technology resources of the agency and are heavily involved in discussions about the recent changes to the ADA in regard to a high level of access online, as well as balancing the access with the increasing demands of cybersecurity as the world continues to evolve and become more virtual.

I would like to acknowledge the amount of work done to address the needs of our DeafBlind, Deaf with additional disabilities, and Senior communities. Over the years, our agency has served as the oversight agency for a Support Service Provider (SSP) Program, which had been, since its inception, provided through a contract with an organization known as Community Outreach Program for the Deaf or COPD-NM. Last year, COPD-NM informed us they would be unable to continue services and so we worked to ensure another potential vendor would be able to continue servicing this community during the fiscal year. We were fortunate to find Vancro, an agency which provides services such as SSPs in several states across the nation. We secured a one-year contract through a sole source and Vancro picked up where COPD-NM left off. We saw a large growth in use, due in part, to the opening in Albuquerque of PAH! Hiland Plaza, a specialized apartment complex, and also due to Vancro investing resources into connecting with these marginalized communities. That investment and continued success translated into a multiyear contract based on Vancro's performance and commitment to the Hearing Loss community, Vancro hired local DeafBlind and Deaf leaders to support this program, acknowledging that to best serve this community they must invest in having leaders from this community. They met with the community multiple times and then opened an office within PAH! Hiland, at the center of the growing community, ensuring no person would have to travel far to receive services in Albuquerque. Vancro also traveled to various locations across the state and ensured they grew their pool of qualified SSPs in various locations to ensure services could be provided in the rural areas just as well as the metropolitan areas.

As I mentioned in my letter last year, we see a high demand for Support Service Provider (SSP) services, case management, and transportation. The funding for the Support Service Program was critical for some of our most vulnerable members of the community. This year though, the growth in the demand along with the planned introduction of a Communication Facilitator (CF) Program has resulted in a growing need for increased funding. We have more requests from this community than in years past and Vancro has strived to satisfy every one of them. Vancro has done so well in addressing non-emergency medical visits and reducing isolation, offering training opportunities along with preventive or continuation of care support, that they increased the total number of people served and doubled the hours of service for our community. This program remains a necessary and critical service that requires not only continued funding but an increased call for additional funding. No longer are we working just to offset increasing costs; our community has grown. As we approached the end of the fiscal year, I began to have people approach me worried that the funds were not enough to sustain the level of services that had long been provided. For the first time in some time, we saw month after month growth in use and costs. Now that the community was able to use the program without any restrictions, it was doing so to the fullest. As people move into our state, into the wonderful PAH! Hiland apartments, the most accessible apartment complex for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in history, so too do they need these critical services. We will, for the first time in years, more than double our number of people served by this program to over 100 people with various additional disabilities and age-related limitations. New Mexico is one of the few leading states adding programs to serve this community. We must continue to do so and support these individuals who have largely been unable to obtain these services and continue to support a program that serves the community based on their needs. This program is a success. Funding is tied directly to the community and their outcomes. With the growth of the community, we are now only limited by how much we support it.

Relay services continue to see a varied level of demand. As I mentioned in previous reports, we saw the increase in previous years largely due to the pandemic. As we returned to in person interaction once again, we saw the decline in relay services. The expansion of internet services helped our community access internet-based communication tools. However, the change in the middle of the year, with the Affordable Connectivity Program, proved to disconnect our community again from the digital space which created some variance in need for traditional relay services again. In addition, we again saw a lack of transition to RealTime-Text (RTT) devices and relay services. As a result, a White Paper was drafted and submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by the National Association of Relay Administrators (NASRA) commenting on the varied support for the transition that began years ago. RTT remains a tool that will enhance access, not only for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing users, but also for our DeafBlind community utilizing braille devices. At the same time, we saw the FCC waive the obligation on vendors to provide fading analog technology, narrowing the types of systems that are available to be utilized in an analog space. With those analog tools now limited to two viable versions of relay services, we now need the next

generation of tools to be readily available to ensure our community has telecommunication access. At the same time, we see the hardware transitioning ahead of those plans and continue to update our Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) to ensure we can leverage those potential tools effectively. With these changes, it becomes a matter of time before the presumed adoption of these new tools takes place and we see a potential impact on our relay numbers. This hasn't happened yet and that is clearly reflected in our minute decline for the performance measures.

As we enter the upcoming fiscal year, we continue to fill the remaining vacancies in the agency, to implement programs already under development such as the Communication Facilitator Program, to engage with the FCC in addressing the developments with relay services and working to address the continued concerns with the decline in the relay funding in the state. We have proposals which include; a large-scale audit, enhancing our hardware in the agency, as well as a request to sustain and look at increasing our funding for the services specific to our DeafBlind, Deaf with additional disabilities, and Deaf Seniors here in New Mexico. Our new staff and team continue to improve upon and increase our outreach and partnerships throughout the state to improve access for our community with hearing loss. We look forward to the next fiscal year with new successes and opportunities to better serve the community.

*G. Nathan Gomme*

G. Nathan Gomme  
NMCDHH Executive Director

# Letter from Chair

*John Hooper*

For over 23 years, the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff have worked hard to provide services to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and speech disabled members of our community. Looking back now as my second year as Chair of the Board for NMCDHH, I have seen firsthand how the Commission's services continue to be utilized throughout the state, and how staff have worked to spread critical and accessible information regarding our services and programs to every corner of the state. With offices in Albuquerque and Las Cruces, I have also seen how the Commission's staff have worked tirelessly to continue supporting our community and address communication barriers that have been encountered at both an individual and systematic level.

Our Executive Director, Nathan Gomme, and the staff of the Commission also continue to work closely with individuals, corporations, and agencies in the field of accessible technology, to address issues regarding how to improve and expand access for our community in the technology of choice, and to enable our constituents to receive basic technological necessities or utilize existing resources in an improved form. These shortcomings in access, and to information, can be problematic, and required addressing throughout the state, in order to avoid the sense of "disconnect" or lack of communication access, that members of our community frequently encounter. With technological advancements consistently evolving, it is critical that we continue to address the barriers to access that are prevalent in New Mexico's rural areas. Broadband internet access is a key part of addressing this issue, and an area in which we are seeing success, and will continue to improve and expand services for several years to come. Access to communication services, like NM Relay, is also critically important to rural members of our community, and as revenue continues to decline for more than the last decade, this creates cause for concern and needs to be addressed. As the broadband expansion project brings more digital and technological possibilities to New Mexicans, we must remain vigilant to ensure that services that impact our Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, such as web and NM Relay, remain accessible.

Commission staff have already started the work to ensure they are at the forefront of accommodations, both physical and digital, with the new coming requirements for Web Content and Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and the changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II. Part of this access work also means working with our local hospitals and Emergency Medical Services, which is evidenced in the report with our collaborations with various police departments around the state, and several hospital systems.

The Commission staff and the Executive Director continue to reach out to various agencies on every level, from federal government to state legislature and to the county



and local governments. Staff work both to educate, and learn from our communities, in order to address the shortcomings experienced by many members of the Hearing Loss community throughout the state. The Commission has worked to keep their virtual presence strong through its webpage, Facebook, and email newsletter, as well as through their social media accounts updated frequently with the most current information available on subjects covering a wide range of topics; from evaluating the current equipment of the Telecommunications Equipment Program, providing resources to the most updated information for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind, and information regarding the advocacy work being done in providing information on communication access, education on hearing loss and other tools/resources.

The work continues on the ground level, with Commission staff working with a broad variety of organizations and entities. Some of these interactions involve trainings and outreach programs, which serve to educate those who do not have hearing loss, about resources and accommodations that are to be made readily available for their employees or their patrons with hearing loss. Commission staff provide expert guidance and support to these organizations as needed. As New Mexico is the fifth largest state in our nation, we still have a lot of ground to cover! Your continued support helps us continue to reach out and help those in need. With this support, the Commission can continue to bridge gaps in communication, and access, and allow our constituents to collaborate with each other more effectively, through technology and education; making this state, your state, a state of equality.

Sincerely,

*John Hooper*

John Hooper, NMCDHH Board Chair



# Agency Overview

## *Purpose*

The State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NMCDHH) was established by the New Mexico Legislature (NMSA 1978 §28-11B-2) to promote services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind throughout New Mexico.

## *Mission Statement*

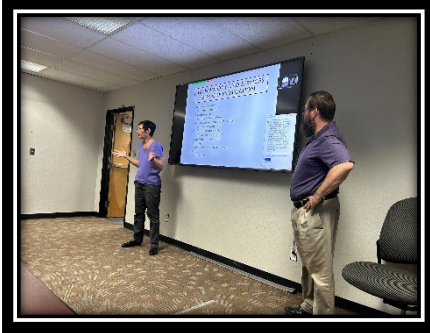
The New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides effective leadership, education, advocacy, and programs to reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural, and intellectual well-being of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind New Mexicans and their families, friends, and colleagues.

## *Vision Statement – “Impact and Empower”*

The State of New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a dynamic resource that will enhance the quality of life for Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens of New Mexico by being:

- ✓ The recognized advocate in important issues impacting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community
- ✓ The proactive provider of innovative programs and services
- ✓ The statewide umbrella and information clearinghouse for interested individuals, organizations, agencies and institutions

# NMCDHH Activities during FY 2024.

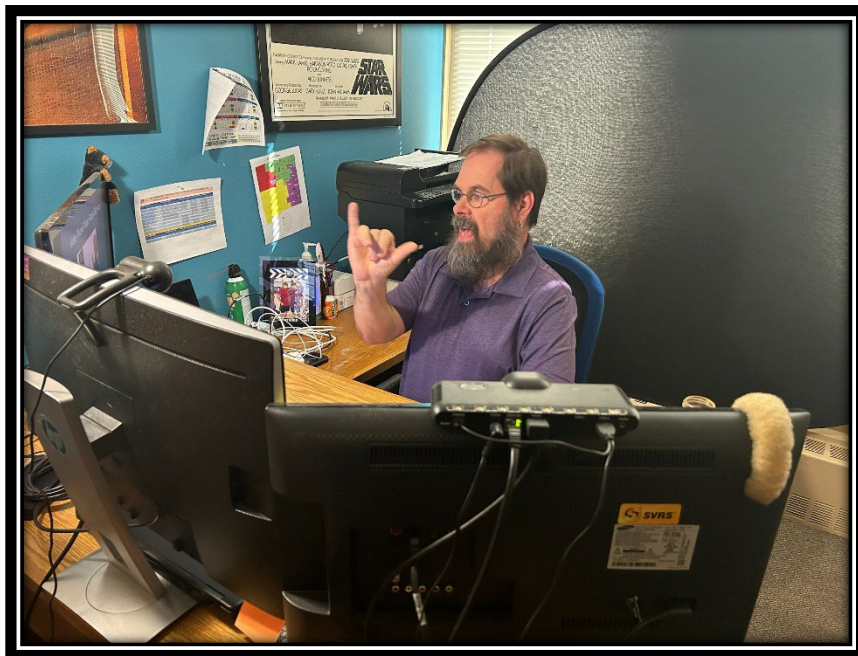


*Lisa Dignan and Roger Robb presented to the Law Office of the Public Defender on working with Deaf people in court, and how to use an ASL interpreter. Our staff interpreter Jessica Eubank interprets many of these presentations, often with NMCDHH apprentices to give them valuable experience.*





*Roger Robb performed 75 presentations during FY24.*





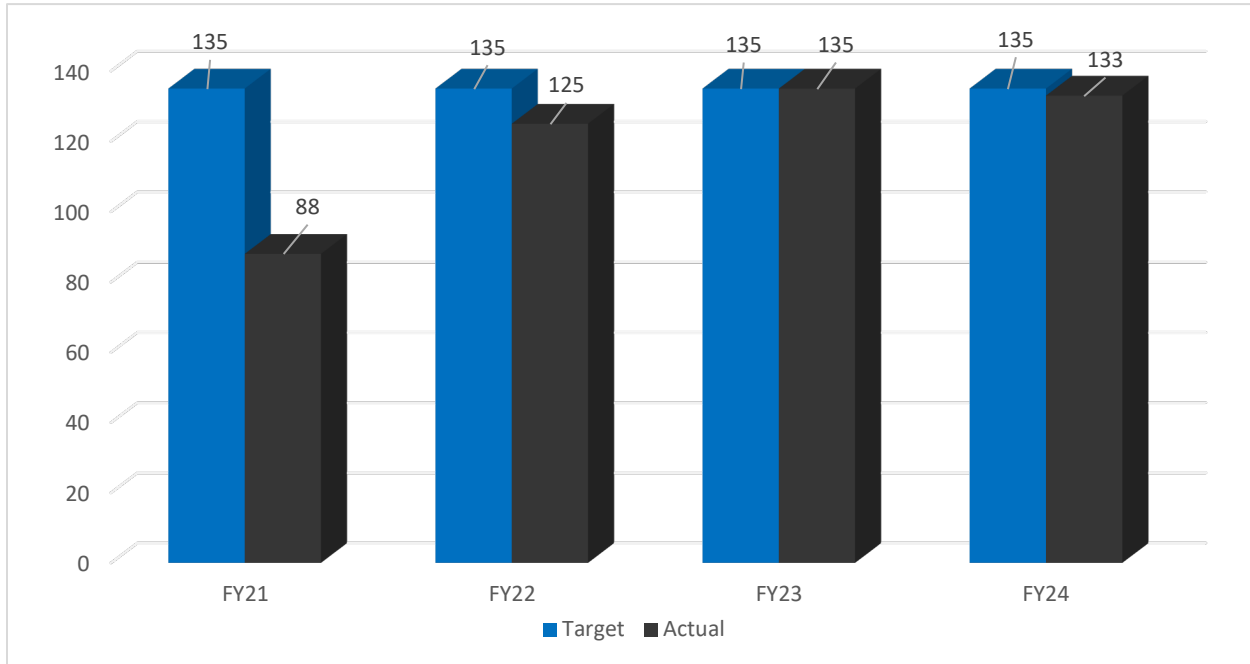
*NMCDHH conducted its first hybrid board meeting in June*



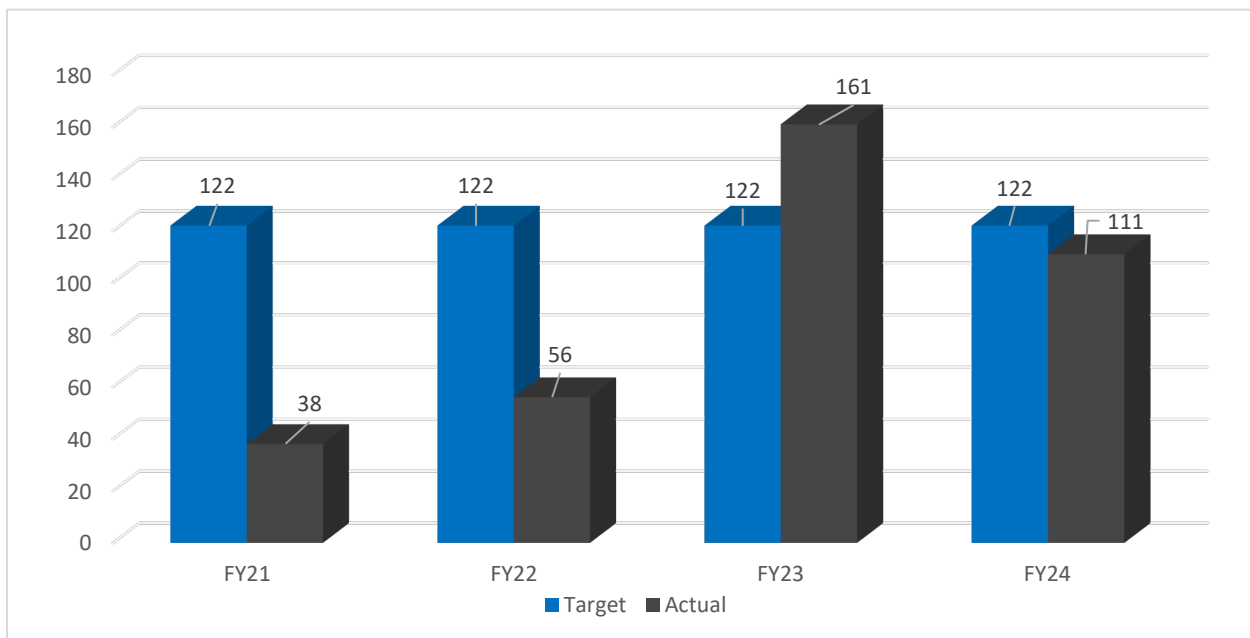
*NMCDHH in collaboration with Presbyterian Healthcare Services, hosted a Town Hall in Santa Fe in May 2024.*

# Legislative Performance Measures

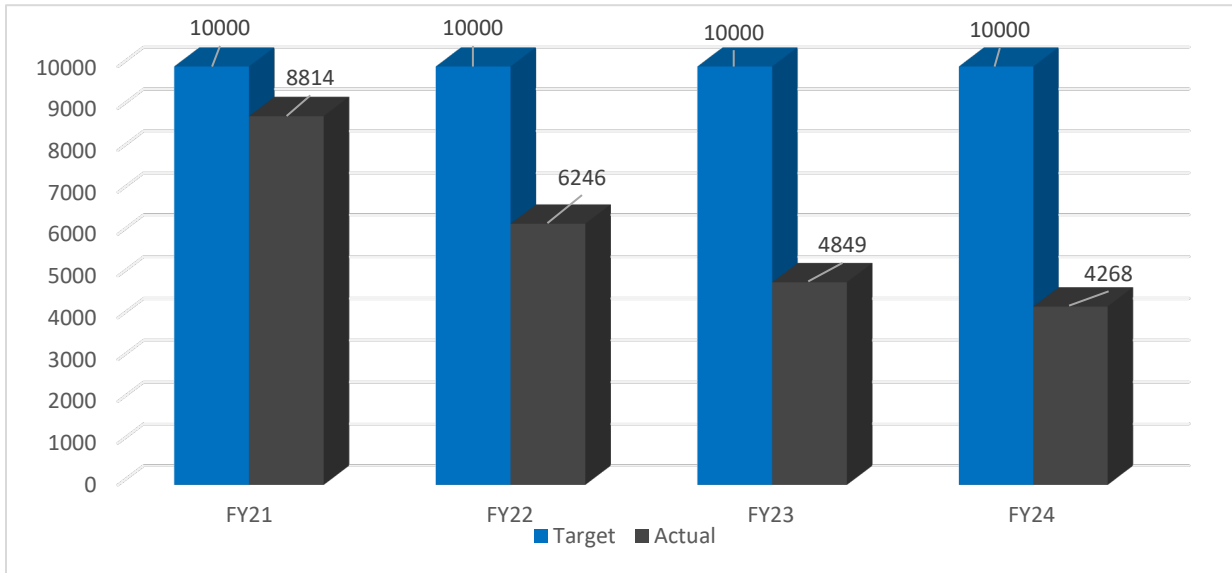
*Number of Workshops & Training Sessions – 99% of FY24 Target*



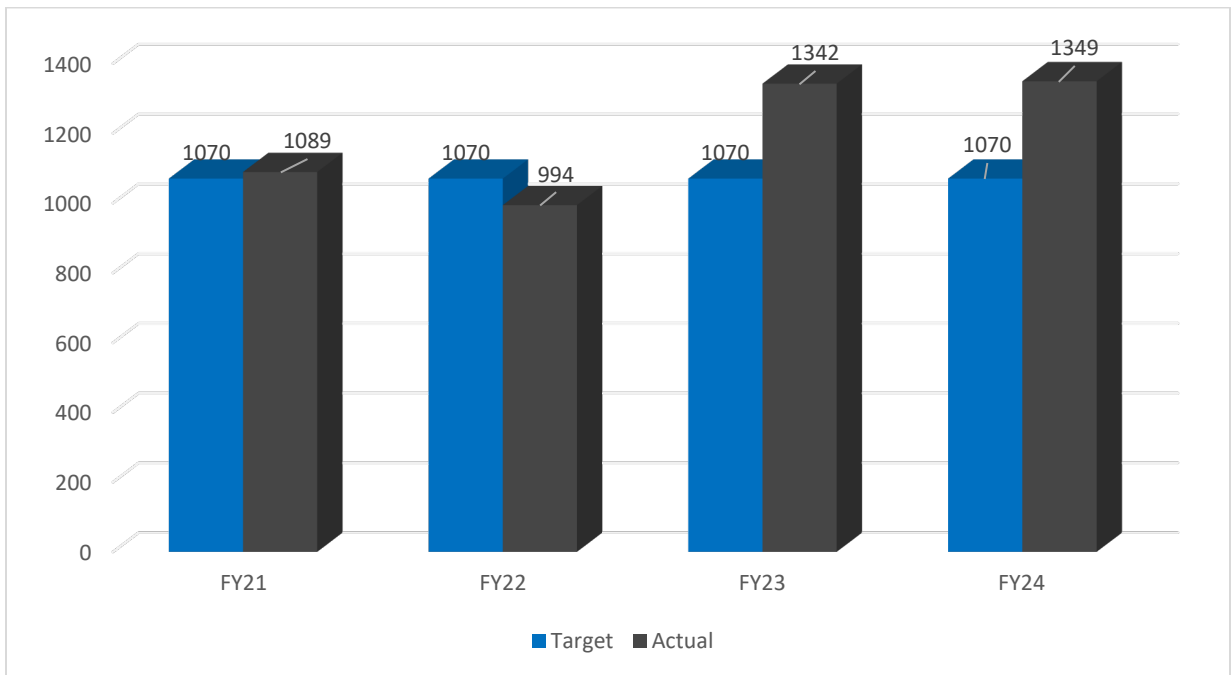
*Number of Outreach Events Coordinated – 91% of FY24 Target*



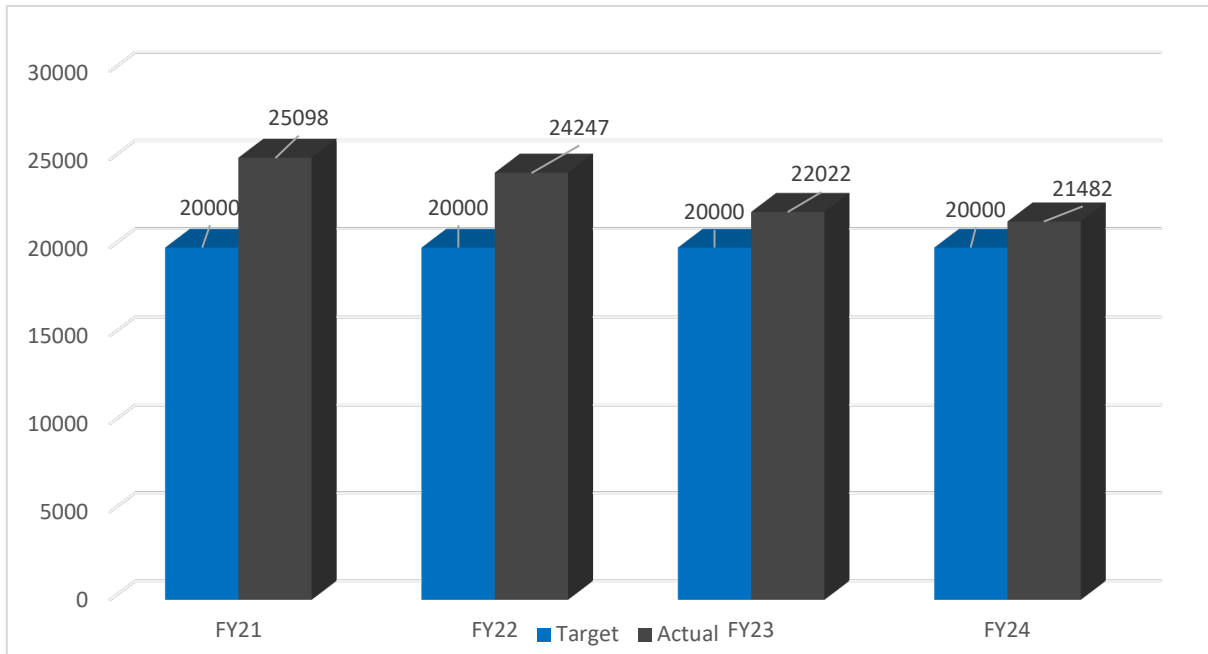
*Average Number of Relay Minutes per Month – 43% of FY24 Target*



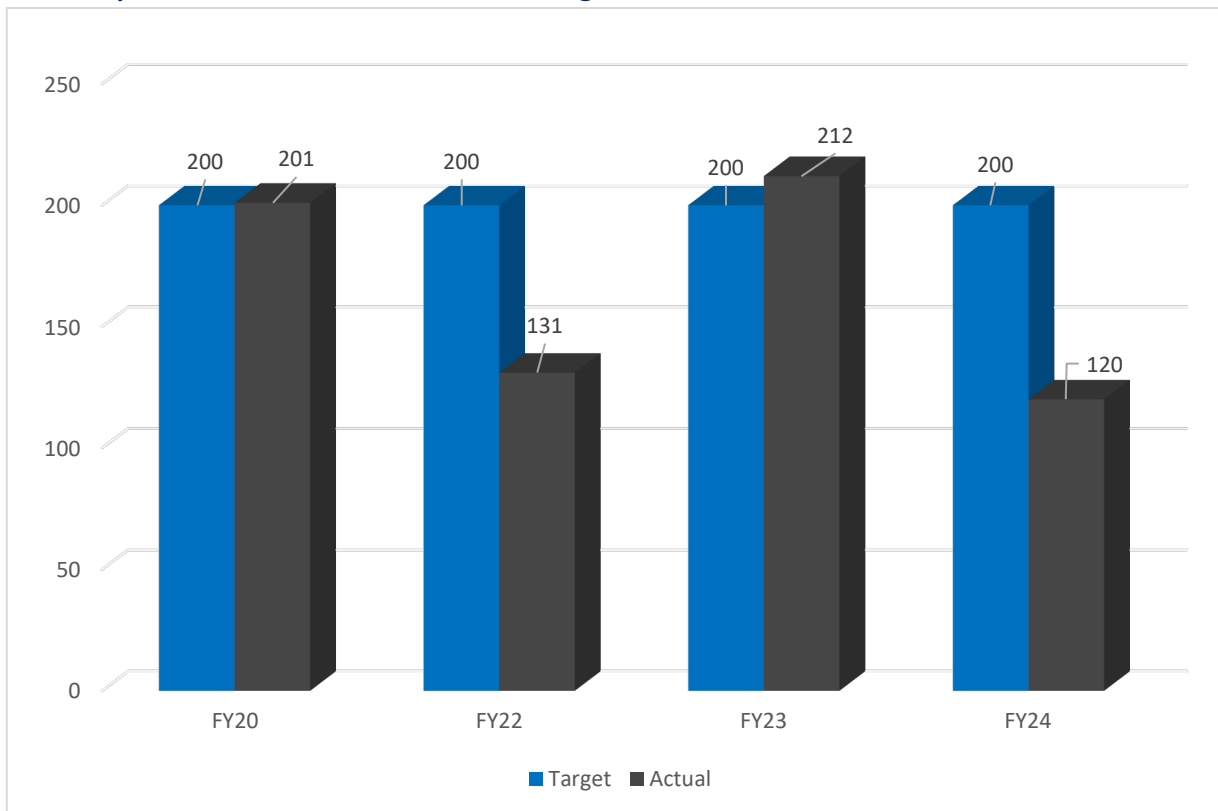
*Number of Accessible Technology Distributions – 126% of FY24 Target*



*Number of Communication Barriers Addressed – 107% of Target*



*Number of Interpreters in CDHH Sponsored Professional Development – 60% of FY24 Target*

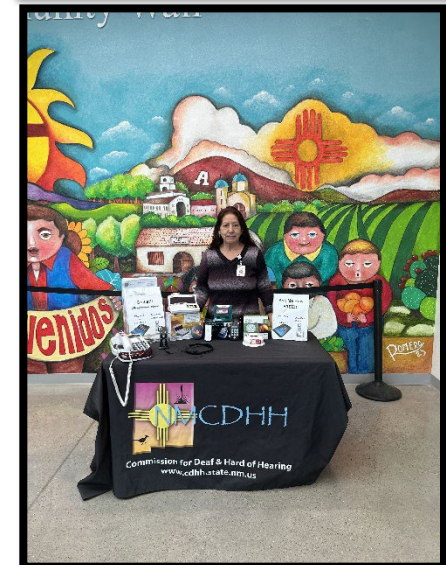




# NMCDHH Outreach FY24

NMCDHH attended numerous booths across the state to provide one-on-one information and one-stop education regarding equipment for telecommunications and information about our agency. Health and wellness fairs, food banks and school districts all over the state have proven to be positive places where participants learn more about the telecommunications equipment that NMCDHH provides. Combined, the Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices attended 111 booths, with 6,980 booth visitors.







# Programs & Services

## Community Advocacy

*Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy*

The Department of Community Advocacy (DCA) provides individual advocacy, system advocacy, community education, outreach and Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program and state-wide relay services. NMCDHH partners with several state, local, and county agencies as well as businesses to collaborate on services for all people with disabilities and participates in special projects. The department developed and continued to implement its strategic plan for law enforcement in New Mexico, continues to work with healthcare providers and hospitals, and conducts trainings on communication access for all types of agencies and businesses throughout the State of New Mexico.

There are seven FTE positions in two offices for the department.

- Albuquerque Office
  - Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy
  - Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist
  - Dennis Stidham, Community Advocacy Specialist
  - Myra Sandoval, Community Advocacy Specialist
  - Community Advocacy Specialist (Vacant)
  
- Las Cruces Office
  - Jennifer Dahlgren, Community Advocacy Specialist
  - Susana Santillan, Community Advocacy Specialist

### **Individual and System Advocacy**

NMCDHH advocates on two levels, the first level is on an individual level and the second level is on a systemic level. We often help and advocate for individuals who have faced communication barriers in employment, with government services and in educational settings. Additionally, communication barriers such as those commonly found in health care settings and during the use of emergency services are addressed as we are made aware of them. Individual advocacy can be a difficult ongoing process where several factors impede a person's ability to effectively navigate through various systems. While addressing the individual situation, we use the information collected to create a plan to address the issue on a larger scale and resolve the barriers before another person encounters them. Some examples of how we do this include: Educational Vlogs in sign language, continuing to find ways to improve and develop communication access tools, and addressing communication barriers with law

enforcement, healthcare providers, clinical offices, local employees, law firms, schools, Social Security Administration, 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), courts, retail stores, mental health therapists, American Immigration Council (AIC) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), medical insurance companies, and nonprofit organizations. NMCDHH remains an active source of information as we help the community improve their engagement with their legislative body and we are committed to improving and ensuring that statewide and federal disability regulations and laws are in place and acceded. Public awareness and educational trainings are an important tool and often provide a proactive resource when provided to the community.

### **Community Advocacy**

For FY24, in the Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices, our Community Advocacy Specialists, Dennis Stidham, Myra Sandoval, Jennifer Dahlgren (joined in January 2024), and Susana Santillan worked throughout the year to improve outcomes for our Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf with additional disabilities and Hard of Hearing community. Advocacy staff worked with over 535 individuals on advocacy cases from all four corners of the state during FY24, with over 500 cases successfully closed.

FY24 was a year of significant change for the New Mexico hearing loss community, and for the advocacy department. Late in FY23, The PAH! Hiland Plaza complex opened, offering low-income housing, with special considerations and developments for Deaf and Deaf with additional disabilities. The opening of this facility saw a large increase in the hearing loss population in Albuquerque, and particularly amongst the DeafBlind population. As this population growth occurred NMCDHH also shifted to a new vendor for Support Service Provider (SSP) services. The previous vendor, COPD-NM, was unable to continue operations in the state of New Mexico and as such could no longer provide SSP services. As a result, COPD-NM declined to continue services and NMCDHH had to find a new vendor. A 1-year Sole Source was issued, and Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services was selected after exploring several potential local options for a vendor for one year, which combined with the growth of the population, made for some significant changes the services. This transition included a review as well as retraining on best practices for serving this particular segment of the hearing loss community, which includes persons who are DeafBlind, Deaf persons with additional disabilities, and Deaf Seniors. Vancro identified that in order to both engage with the community and to better serve the community, they would need to host several community listening sessions to learn the concerns and requests related to services and experiences with the past vendor. It was during this time that a recognized need for a Communication Facilitator service was needed.

The goal of having a Communication Facilitator is to allow a person who identifies as DeafBlind, or a person with a hearing loss and additional disabilities (Ex: hand dexterity), to make a person to person (P2P) call via video-based telecommunication

platforms which include Video Relay Services (VRS), Facetime, Teams, and more. While there are several ideas about how to make this service available, including braille refresh devices, when appropriate. This often requires the DeafBlind end user to utilize braille effectively and in a rapid manner, while also using a 3<sup>rd</sup>- party system for traditional relay service call assistants to type what is being said, while at the same time allowing for a video relay call to work with American Sign Language (ASL) from the end user side. The system with a Communication Facilitator, typically identified as a CF, is different in several ways. The CF is a sighted person, who may be Deaf, who provides visual information to the person who is unable to see the video screen or receive visual ASL. A CF has to be able to communicate effectively by copying the other person who is signing on the videophone screen while also providing visual information. This might be through close proximity for the information to be picked up or through tactile sign language. The CF may also be a person with a skill set that gives them the capability of communicating with a person who is Deaf but unable to utilize sign language effectively, or communicate via text-based communication, due to dexterity and/or other impaired functions of the hands which are generally required to use ASL. CF services are in practice in Washington state, Maryland, and Oregon.

A request was made, and approved in the January 2024 Legislative Session, to fund a Communication Facilitator Pilot Program. To begin the proposal, standards were developed. The idea would be to consider adding to the suite of services under the SSP program, but perhaps in addition to the services they are already providing, as to not adversely impact the current funding for the SSP services. That would suggest that the current SSP's would not necessarily provide this service without additional training and pay. This would also require a distinction in roles and funding allocation, as to ensure both services function and address the needs for which they are intended. This potential service is a significant step towards improving these marginalized and underserved community's ability to have natural conversations that many of us take for granted and also takes a necessary step toward equity in the telecommunication space. A special appropriation of \$200,000 was received to be used for a Communication Facilitator Pilot Program. We are already seeing an amazing growth and need for the continuation of the program and will be requesting that the program remain to continue to address this unique barrier that has, traditionally not been addressed.



*The initial community members involved with the Communication Facilitator (CF) Pilot Program Meet for the first time to start their training.*



*A CF trainee explains the room set up using tactile sign language to another individual.*

The agreement with Vancro was initially for a period of one year, with a full Request for Proposal (RFP) submitted in February 2024. During the request period, we received only one vendor proposal. The proposal addressed and supported every aspect of the scope of work in the state. In late April, after discussion with the State Purchasing Agent assigned to this RFP, we were able to effectively shift from a RFP procurement to a Sole Source, under their guidance and recommendation with the understanding that we secure a multiple-year contract. This change resulted in ensuring we had the correct

justification for the request and required that we follow the timeline established for a Sole Source procedure. This pushed the timetable for the completion of the contract into late May or early June. During that time, we also still had to prepare for the implementation of the CF Pilot Program beginning in July, which would not be able to occur until the contract was signed. This also meant planning for the possibility that the current vendor, Vancro, would not be awarded the contract for the next fiscal year. A transition meeting occurred on June 11th, with the goal being to continue services without interruption, in case there was a possible suspension of services or transfer to another vendor. Fortunately, the Sole Source was approved and signed. The term will last until June of Fiscal Year 28.

From FY23 to FY24, we have seen an increase from the 59 people served to 89, which represents a growth of 30 users of the service at the time of transition from COPD-NM to Vancro. This is a 50.8% increase in services. A large contributor to the demand, as we mentioned earlier, was due to the PAH! Hiland Plaza complex, as well as the vendor Vancro implementing their program with efficiency and their commitment to finding members of the community in need of the services. We are also seeing the hourly growth in use of the of the program at 7,219 hours, which is an increase over the previous year of over 3,254 hours, an 82.1% increase. This growth is a good thing but also requires a discussion of what we will continue to see in terms of costs. The funds for the program in the past have largely been based on the usage in the previous years, which have been routinely in the 3,500-to-3,900-hour range, with the user base growing year to year about 1 to 10% year to year. With this increased growth, and the fact that the CF program is in the pilot stage, it is clear that the funding request cannot revert to the FY24 budget levels without severely limiting the persons already receiving the services. The contractor has already acknowledged this and taken steps to ensure they only use the funding approved by the contract. However, the needs within the community are still showing growth and will eventually exceed the funding that is currently in place. As I said, this is a mixed result, showing that we are expanding the use of the service and supporting the community at a higher level. With this growth the work done by Vancro highlights the number of people in our state who need the services and allows us to better discuss the needs of the community in relation to the budget requests for the future, and eventually led to a cap on service hours.

**Director of Community Advocacy, Corina Gutiérrez, accomplishments include:**

- Participated in monthly/quarterly meetings with the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) Patient & Family Advisory Council (PFAC), the Interagency Transition Alliance (ITA), and the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force.
- Advocated for four individuals to ensure communication access at various healthcare providers. These individuals faced challenges communicating with medical staff through Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) or written notes. Ms. Gutiérrez collaborated with and educated the healthcare employees to address each individual's communication needs, emphasizing the importance of utilizing on-site interpreting services. As a result, appropriate communication access was provided for our community in clinics, the Emergency Department, and other medical settings.

- Worked with several mental health therapists from a local nonprofit organization and educated them about providing appropriate communication accommodations for Hard of Hearing and Deaf individuals. The therapists were receptive to the information provided by Ms. Gutiérrez and are better prepared, and able to provide effective communication access when needed/requested. Ms. Gutiérrez shared with them the factsheet on how to find a signed language interpreter. The therapists were also interested in receiving the Hearing Loss Sensitivity training that the Commission provides, and Ms. Gutiérrez connected them to her Community Education Specialist, Mr. Roger Robb, for further collaboration and education. The hearing loss community often faces extensive barriers to receiving appropriate access to mental health care, and these collaborations with local mental health organizations are an important part of the work that we do to reduce these barriers.
- Networked with staff members from the American Immigration Council (AIC) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to discuss improving language access resources for unaccompanied Deaf and Hard of Hearing children who were in confinement. Some of these resources include American Sign Language (ASL) and Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs). Ms. Gutiérrez also connected these organizations with the National Association for the Deaf, to have this important educational work done at a national level.
- During FY24, NMCDHH prioritized working with hospitals, medical clinics, medical insurance companies, mental health facilities, and other medical providers such as specialty clinics, to address communication barriers in receiving services. Towards this goal, our advocates assisted many individuals in all areas of the state to obtain effective communication services. Additionally, we advocated with the UNMH, Presbyterian, and Lovelace medical groups on a systemic level. In collaboration with Presbyterian, the Commission hosted three community town hall events, two in Albuquerque, and one in Santa Fe. These events were well attended and allowed members of our community, across a broad spectrum of hearing loss and disability levels, to share their experience with Presbyterian services. These stories were both inspirational, and heartbreaking. By sharing these stories, members of the hearing loss community provide valuable feedback to Presbyterian staff. Staff present at the event took note of this feedback, aiming to improve the services provided by Presbyterian. A common theme that has been reported at all three events, is the ongoing severe shortage of sign language interpreters across the state. This shortage of available interpreters impacts communication access for individuals with hearing loss in all aspects of their lives, but has tremendous and potentially life-threatening consequences in a medical setting. 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, and we are planning to host a fourth town hall in southern New Mexico in FY25. We are also attempting to host town halls with other medical systems, including Christus St. Vincent in Santa Fe. Finally, our work with mental health facilities is of great importance as the hearing loss community often faces extensive barriers to receiving appropriate access to mental health care, and these collaborations with local mental



health organizations are an important part of the work that we do to reduce these barriers.

- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Gomme participated in DeafBlind Awareness Day on November 18, 2023, where representatives from various agencies and organizations delivered brief presentations on the services available to the DeafBlind community.
- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Gomme met with representatives from AccesSOS a platform that has potential benefits in emergency situations, during the meeting Mr. Gomme committed to continuing to work with AccesSOS to connect with various local organizations as he explains in his letter.
- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Gomme supported Vancro Integrated Interpreting Service (VIIS) in organizing a town hall meeting for Deaf Seniors and Deaf community members who have additional disabilities at the PAH Hiland. Community members had the opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of Vancro's initiatives for our community.
- Ms. Gutiérrez, Mr. Gomme, and other Commission staff attended a variety of events with the new vendor for SSP services Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services (VIIS), some of the highlight events were:
  - A town hall meeting for Deaf Seniors and Deaf community members who have additional disabilities at the recently opened PAH! Hiland Plaza facility. Community members had the opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of Vancro's initiatives for our community.
  - DeafBlind Awareness Day on November 18, 2023, where representatives from various agencies and organizations delivered brief presentations on the services available to the DeafBlind community.
- Worked with MDC to ensure the provision of an ASL interpreter for services offered to inmates. MDC 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.
- Continued to discuss with the directors from the Human Service Department (HSD) communication access for our DeafBlind community. Some DeafBlind individuals had attempted to schedule appointments with case representatives at the HSD office, only to be told that they must use the "walk-in" system, which does not allow access to ASL interpreters. Ms. Gutiérrez expressed concerns that DeafBlind individuals typically cannot communicate through written means due to their visual impairments. The directors acknowledged the need for interpreters and agreed to work with their front-line staff to ensure on-site interpreters are made available for the DeafBlind community.
- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Robb met with the directors from both Lovelace Medical Group and Lovelace Medical Center on several occasions. Despite being separate entities, both groups expressed a willingness to partner with us to break down communication barriers for our community. The directors discussed ways to find solutions for improving communication access with us.

- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Robb met with the Language Access Coordinator from the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) to discuss communication methods between police officers and our community. The discussion included the potential use of text messages, the implementation of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) apps on officers' mobile devices and plans to set up VRI at several substations. APD acknowledged that text messages should not be used for communication with our community and agreed to utilize VRI through apps or on-site interpreters instead. They will provide training for the officers accordingly. Two videos were produced in FY24, one to train APD officers on how to interact with individuals with hearing loss who have a placard, and one for community members, to help them understand how to use the placard to interact with police. Both videos were filmed in FY24 and are in postproduction to be released during FY25. NMCDHH staff are also working with Rio Rancho, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe police departments to address communication barriers in their communities, and we will be continuing to establish relations and collaboration with other police departments around the state. This initiative is scheduled for FY25.
- Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Brennan were invited by NMSD to attend the New Mexico Inclusive Post Secondary Education Convening. The two-day event featured both in-person and Zoom sessions, offering a variety of interesting topics. Presenters included experts from the National Deaf Center, Utah State University, and Inclusive Higher Education from Colorado.
- Collaborated with Telemundo Broadcasting Company and the representatives from the National Mano a Mano Organization to ensure communication access during the US Deaf Women's soccer match against the Australian Deaf team, which was scheduled to be broadcasted on national TV had access to interpreters. Ms. Gutiérrez proposed having Latinx Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), interpreting through Picture in Picture (PIP), and they would work with the hearing ASL interpreters throughout the match. This approach made the match accessible on TV, resulting in a very successful communication experience.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Myra Sandoval, worked with many community members on several different cases.

***Here are some of her highlights:***

- Successfully advocated for four Deaf individuals by educating various medical clinics about their responsibility to provide ASL interpreters. Initially, the clinics assumed that patients could bring their own interpreters or that written communication would be sufficient. They also wanted to use Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), but it was not effective for the Deaf patients. As a result of Ms. Sandoval's advocacy, the clinics agreed to work with interpreter referral agencies and provide on-site interpreters for medical 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.

- Assisted a Hard of Hearing individual address their need for an ASL interpreter during an internship opportunity at a local non-profit organization. The organization did not have prior experience with working with individuals with hearing loss. However, the organization was motivated and willing to ensure proper communication access for the individual, resulting in a successful outcome.
- Collaborated with the Social Services Administration (SSA) office to ensure consistency in providing an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual after an initial appointment was scheduled without an interpreter. Worked with the individual's medical insurance company to ensure that they provided an interpreter. Ms. Sandoval educated the company on the significance of getting an interpreter for effective communication. They successfully implemented VRI, which provided effective communication access for this individual and allowed them to obtain the services needed.
- Became actively involved with the organization, Inhora, serving as an advisory board member. Inhora's mission is centered around assisting individuals and their families with end-of-life care. They aim to provide a home environment for these individuals and educate the community about the nature of dying, with a specific focus on those who are disabled, veterans, and the un-housed. In her role on the advisory board, Ms. Sandoval provided resources, tools, guidance, and education to help Inhora understand what appropriate communication access is for members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community.
- 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.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual's workplace communication access following instances of perceived harassment. Ms. Sandoval arranged a meeting with the employer to advocate for the 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 this 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 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 community. 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 gave to HSD about website accessibility. The project team was open to receiving feedback from the community to enhance website accessibility. The launch date for the updated website is currently unknown.
- Worked with a domestic violence shelter to ensure they understood their responsibility to provide an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual staying there. Ms. Sandoval worked with a Case Manager (CM) at the shelter, during this process Ms. Sandoval showcased how to utilize an ASL interpreter effectively, which the CM was able to observe. The CM learned that having an ASL interpreter greatly benefits everyone involved, enhancing mutual understanding. As a result, the shelter successfully established a contract with an interpreter referral agency and will now provide interpreters for any Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals in the future.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual to ensure they had a CDI for court hearings. Ms. Sandoval worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to arrange for an out-of-state CDI to provide remote interpreting services. As a result, the individual was able to understand the legal process and their requirements.
- 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.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Dennis Stidham, worked with community members on several different cases.

***Here are some of his highlights:***

- Advocated for three Deaf and Deaf with additional disabilities individuals to ensure appropriate communication access at medical facilities. Initially, the facilities requested that patients bring someone to interpret for them or use Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). However, having an unlicensed interpreter is not appropriate and using VRI was not effective. As a result, the facilities collaborated with interpreter referral agencies and provided on-site interpreters for the patients.
- Advocated for an individual who identifies as Deaf with additional disabilities who needed an ASL interpreter for a surgical procedure. The medical facility asked the Deaf individual to bring their own interpreter. Mr. Stidham explained to the office manager the rights of the Deaf patient to have appropriate communication access, which the medical facility is responsible to provide by law. Ultimately, the facility signed a contract with an interpreter referral agency to provide an interpreter for the individual.
- Worked with a local company and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to provide an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual's job training. DVR covered the interpreting cost for an initial period of the training, However, the individual needed to continue to have an interpreter until the training was completed. Mr. Stidham helped the company understand their responsibility to provide appropriate communication access. The company supported their employee, in classroom and on-the-job training, by providing an interpreter.
- Advocated on behalf of a Deaf individual to ensure communication access during a job interview in a restaurant. The manager initially indicated only a standard open interview policy without scheduled times. Mr. Stidham explained the need for accommodation and educated them about setting up a specific day and time for the interview. The restaurant worked with an interpreter referral agency, successfully scheduling an interpreter for the individual's interview, resulting in a positive outcome.
- After the departure of Mr. Siergey, Mr. Stidham was largely in charge of processing Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) applications. Processing these consumed a large portion of Mr. Stidham's time which meant less time available for community booths. Mr. Stidham displayed great initiative in learning the ins and outs of the program before the departure of Mr. Siergey, and we are grateful for his work in bridging the gap between Mr. Siergey and Mr. Sinderholm.
- 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 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 an ASL tactile interpreter for future home visits to the DeafBlind individual.
- 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 an employer, a retail organization, arranged for an ASL interpreter during their training sessions. Mr. Stidham educated 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.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual to ensure they had communication access during their meeting with law enforcement to correct a report.
- Worked with a large corporation to arrange an on-site interpreter for a Deaf employee. Although VRI had been used previously, it frequently froze, hindering effective communication between the Deaf employee and their supervisor. Mr. Stidham worked with the corporation's Human Resources staff to ensure an on-site interpreter was provided, which successfully resolved the communication issues.

- Worked with a restaurant to educate them about the importance of providing an interpreter for their Deaf employee. Although text messages had been used for communication, the Deaf employee was unable to understand them effectively. The employer was unaware of the communication issues until they were informed. Subsequently, they established a contract with an interpreter referral agency and provided an interpreter for their meetings.
- Advocated for a DeafBlind individual to ensure proper communication access at the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD). The MVD did arrange for an on-site interpreter capable of providing tactile interpreting for the DeafBlind individual.
- Worked with an apartment manager to arrange a doorbell for their Deaf resident. The manager was initially unaware of their responsibility to provide the doorbell but was cooperative once informed. They purchased the doorbell and installed it for the Deaf resident.

Advocacy staff worked throughout the year to improve their skills and abilities by attending a variety of trainings and workshops. Some of the highlights of these beneficial experiences were: Ms. Gutiérrez, Ms. Sandoval and Mr. Stidham attended the National Leadership Training Conference that was hosted by the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) in Albuquerque. Additionally, Ms. Sandoval and Mx. Dahlgren completed 40 hours of Core Advocacy Training hosted by the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NMCADV).

### **Community Education**

Information, recommendations, workshops, and potential solutions are offered on topics such as Deaf Sensitivity, Effective Communications, Assistive Technology, and an overview of the New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program to private and public agencies, professional organizations, businesses, and individuals. Often this work is done by our Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb. Other members of NMCDHH or one of our vendors will provide those specialized trainings, as appropriate. Trainings were provided via a hybrid of methods.

- The Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb, his colleagues, and Hamilton Relay, our Relay vendor, provided 133 presentations/trainings during FY24. Mr. Robb provided 75 of these presentations. The topics presented included: American Sign Language (ASL), Accessibility, Deaf Culture, Fingerspelling, NMCDHH Overview, Shadow Interpreting, Hearing Loss Awareness and Hearing Loss Sensitivity.
- Mr. Robb presented, as well as provided advocacy services to: 911 Dispatchers, the ADA Accessibility Council of Albuquerque, Fairwinds Senior Living, Presbyterian Healthcare System, Lovelace Medical Group, Albuquerque Police Department, Monarch/SOL, UNM Transportation

Safety Center, Transportation Safety Center, TriCore Laboratories, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Law Office of the Public Defender, Las Cruces Police Department, Santa Fe Police Department, Presbyterian Hospital, Presbyterian Healthcare System, Rio Rancho Police Department, US Citizenship & Immigration Services, AAA Events & Tents, Aural Rehabilitation Class at UNM, Presbyterian Medical Center in Santa Fe, UNM Signed Language Interpreter Program, UNM Hospital, Vancro and more.

- Mr. Robb also participated in the UNMH Patient and Family Advisory Committee and served on the City of Albuquerque ADA Advisory Council (ADAAC).
- Mr. Robb produced and disseminated 7 new informational Vlogs, re-edited 1 vlog and started postproduction on 1.
  - Presbyterian & NMCDHH Town Hall Partnership (re-edited)
  - PHS July Event Deadline Extended
  - Directions to Savage Auditorium
  - How to get to the Large Community Room at Rust Medical Center
  - New Date for PHS/NMCDHH Event
  - Santa Fe Medical Center (SFMC) of PHS) Town Hall
  - How to get to the Town Hall Event at SFMC
  - Jennifer Dahlgren Introduction Vlog
  - NMCDHH FY 2024 Mid-Year Report (postproduction)
- Executive Director Gomme presented eight times this fiscal year. He gave four presentations on website accessibility with staff from the New Mexico Attorney General's Office, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, to members of a statewide Collaborative meeting with several Public Information Officer's (PIO's) and to some Chief Information Officers (CIO's) across the state, regarding the upcoming Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) requirements. Mr. Brennan joined Mr. Gomme in this Collaborative due to his knowledge of accessibility and technology. Mr. Gomme also gave a website accessibility presentation to the HSD. The positive reception of this work led to further collaborations between the HSD and the Commission. Mr. Gomme was asked to present to Tax and Revenue representatives directly on access needs for our specific community on their website. Mr. Gomme went over the entire Tax and Revenue website with their staff highlighting some positives and concerns throughout the website. Mr. Gomme spoke at the ADA Pride flag raising event about the work being done at the Roundhouse to support individuals with disabilities throughout New Mexico. Mr. Gomme, at the request of the leadership at the PAH! Hiland Ribbon cutting event, discussed the Commission's work with the Deaf Culture Center (DCC) and various representatives in the development and fruition of the project.



During this event, he also announced to the public that Vancro had agreed to open their office at PAH!.

- Ms. Gutiérrez provided 7 presentations this Fiscal Year. Some of the topics included Deaf Self-Advocacy Training (DSAT) and NMCDHH services. She also participated in a panel for the UNM Sign Language Interpreting Program.
- Ms. Jessica Eubank provided 7 presentations on topics such as “How to Interpret Sensitive Subjects”, and “The NMCDHH Apprentice Program & Application Process”.
- Mr. Stidham provided 19 “Introduction to ASL” presentations.
- Ms. Santillan provided 2 “Overview of NMCDHH Services” presentations.
- 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 in FY25 and beyond.
- Ms. Lisa Dignan provided 3 presentations regarding New Mexico Mentoring, and sign language licensure requirements.
- Tom Sena from Hamilton Relay provided 11 presentations across the state regarding the relay program.

# LAS CRUCES SATELLITE OFFICE

## **Individual and Systematic Advocacy**

The Community Advocacy Specialists, Susana Santillan and Jennifer Dahlgren have served the Southern New Mexico hearing loss community by providing individual, system advocacy and service coordination. With their advocacy efforts, over 4,500 communication barriers were removed among our clients and public entities, including governmental and law enforcement agencies. Ms. Santillan and Mx. Dahlgren worked with consumers and service providers from city, county, state agencies and businesses, such as American Disability Act (ADA) coordinators, Department of Health, New Mexico Workforce Connection Southwest, the United Healthcare Medicare Brokers, courts, governmental and law enforcements agencies, medical facilities, nonprofit agencies, and private entities. Ms. Santillan also did booths, presentations and provided information and referrals in southern New Mexico.

## **Distribution of TEDP Applications:**

Ms. Santillan provided outreach to potential consumers via resource booths and attended networking meetings. She assisted consumers with applying for TEDP by demonstrating the technology and reviewing the catalog and application form to ensure they were completed correctly.

## **Education, Advocacy and Collaboration:**

Many booths were hosted by Ms. Santillan this Fiscal Year to educate Southern New Mexico communities about the NMCDHH contact information, resources, and services.

Ms. Santillan and Mx. Dahlgren collaborated and assisted with Southern New Mexico communities, private businesses, organizations, city, county, state, and local government agencies, by providing guidance, information, and referral, regarding how to accommodate their consumers with hearing loss, where to find interpreters, closed captioning services, and other specialized resources. They also built several new relationships with local community partners to promote NMCDHH's visibility in the community, through community collaboration and involvement with Southern New Mexico entities.

They participated in virtual and in-person networking meetings to continue their outreach efforts in Southern New Mexico. They provided information and trainings on American Disability Act regarding effective communication, provided an overview of NMCDHH service presentations and more.

Ms. Santillan served on seven committees for the fiscal year of 2024 to educate and provide guidance on hearing loss awareness programs and reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural, and intellectual well-being of Deaf and Hard of Hearing New Mexicans and their families, friends, and colleagues:

- Behavioral Health Local Collaborative
- Behavioral Health Local Collaborative Policy & Advocacy State Committee

- City of Las Cruces American with Disabilities Act Advisory Council- Secretary
- Doña Ana Community United Time Bank Steering Committee
- Emergency Management Community Awareness Subcommittee-Chairperson
- New Mexico Workforce Connection Disabilities Committee
- New Mexico Workforce Monitoring / Performance Committee

Mx. Dahlgren was appointed to the City of Las Cruces ADA Advisory boards and shares their knowledge and expertise at the quarterly meetings.

### **Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2024**

Community Advocacy Specialist, Susana Santillan, worked with community members on several different cases.

#### ***Here are some of her highlights:***

- Contacted the local Public Schools Special Educator Administrator Interpreter Supervisor to let them know a parent contacted her regarding not providing sign language interpreters for their Deaf Ed students. Ms. Santillan worked with the Interpreter Supervisor to ensure sign language interpreters are provided for the Deaf Ed classes. The Supervisor confirmed she has scheduled interpreters at all the Deaf Ed Schools.
- Worked with a local Coordinator of a Developmental and Disability Services & Support Organization to search for a person that is interested in becoming a mentor that signs to assist a Deaf adult male who participates at their social community events. Ms. Santillan was able to assist in finding a candidate to work with the Deaf consumer.
- Continued to participate in meetings to continue her outreach efforts in Southern New Mexico. She assists members of our community who have questions regarding NMCDHH services, various information, and resources on how to better serve the hearing loss community.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual to receive an ASL interpreter for services, and classes at a local community college. Ms. Santillan worked together with the Student Accessibility Services Office to register the student to obtain the appropriate accommodation.
- 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.
- 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.

- Collaborated with the City of Las Cruces ADA Compliance Coordinator to ensure an in-person American Sign Language Interpreter is providing interpreter services at their City Council Meetings.
- Provided the NMCDHH Brochure, Presentation Request Form, Fact Sheets: How to Find a Signed Language Interpreter, Who Pays for Sign Language Interpreters, where to take ASL Classes in New Mexico and more, as requested to over 134 organizations throughout Southern New Mexico.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Jennifer Dahlgren, worked with community members on several different cases.

***Here are some of their highlights:***

- 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 Southern New Mexico offices of NM Legal Aid, the NM Victims' Rights Project, the District Attorney Victims' Rights office, shelters, NM Immigration Legal Center, and Catholic Charities. Work continued with all of the agencies for interpreting services throughout FY24.
- Successfully advocated for a Deaf individual to receive interpreting services at all court matters and successfully advocated for a CDI.
- Advocated for communication access via an ASL interpreter at NM Early Childhood Education and Care Department.
- 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 a Deaf individual needing accommodations for medical services.
- Worked with the Roswell Social Security Office to ensure they had a contract with a local interpreting agency for onsite interpreting.
- Ensured a Deaf with additional disabilities client had an interpreter at his DD Waiver treatment team meeting.
- Worked with a Deaf with additional disabilities client to self-advocate at his treatment team meeting on the need for interpreter services with providers in order to address their goals and needs.
- Advocated with a DVR contractor that they must provide ASL interpreters for a client who is Deaf with additional disabilities.
- Worked with the DD Waiver contractor and the group home contractor for a person who is Deaf with additional disabilities on providing interpreters for meetings with the individual. In addition, the communication access rights were clarified with the Deaf individual.

- Guided a Deaf individual in how to self-advocate for interpreters.
- Assisted a Deaf individual in requesting an interpreter in a timely matter for a meeting.
- Worked with a Physical Therapy Clinic to ensure they had a contract for interpreter services for in-person appointments with interpreters.
- Provided Fact sheets, presentation request form and general NMCDHH information to 54 agencies and organizations.

# Support Service Provider Program

*As Reported by Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services*

Vancro started providing SSP services to the State of New Mexico July 16th, 2023. Throughout the year we hired a full team – Tammy Greeson -scheduler/SSP, Meagan Gorsuch- Case Manager, Mark Lucero-Muñoz- Case Manager/SSP, with Sara Collins and Cory Brunner as back-end support. Earlier in the fiscal year, Vancro secured rental space at the newly designed PAH! Hiland Plaza building, seeing as the number of potential users in the Albuquerque area were densely located at PAH!.

Vancro's goals this year were to train new staff on the SSP processes and protocols, ensure a robust case management system, as well as a clear complaint process and feedback loop. Additionally, Vancro wanted to re-train SSPs to acclimate them to the process and systems and to recruit additional SSPs in the Albuquerque area, as there is high demand for SSPs. Outreach and education as well as additional trainings were also on the docket. Vancro hosted an SSP meet-and-greet and 3 town halls to best understand the needs of the community. Vancro's goal was not only to increase the number of SSPs available to do the work, but to increase the number of program participants as well. Through Vancro's recruitment efforts and with the influx of new community members arriving from out of state, Vancro has seen a considerable increase in program participants. Vancro successfully hosted a number of Community Events and Engagement and Training throughout the year. Vancro also has made great partnerships with key stakeholders statewide. We are profoundly grateful for the outstanding communication and relationship that we have with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

## **Highlights to mention:**

Vancro is committed to providing all materials in ASL and in written English. Vancro's advertisement and recruitment of staff positions and SSPs was and will continue to be bilingual and in accessible format.

Two examples of materials created in ASL are the SSPs Code of Professional Conduct, which can be seen in ASL at- <https://youtu.be/rMAP2qWeAjo> and the Case Management Release of Information Form, which can be seen in ASL at- <https://youtu.be/GJGNHDUnUrE>.

A particularly noteworthy partnership deserving celebration is the collaboration between Vancro and UNM involving SLIP practicum students. Twice weekly, these students visit the Pah! office to provide mail reading services to participants in the DeafBlind program. This initiative not only grants DeafBlind individuals access to their mail, but also furnishes practicum students with invaluable experience working alongside members of the DeafBlind community. The aim is to prepare these students for future roles as DeafBlind interpreters upon graduation.

**Key metrics:**

For the entire fiscal year, Vancro has provided 7,219.50 Direct SSP hours. They have processed exactly 2000 SSP requests. There are 35 active case management clients with a total of 326 client touch-points for the fiscal year. When Vancro started the contract there were 59 active clients transferred to Vancro. That number has almost doubled, ending the year with 89 in total. Vancro hosted 42 Community Events and Engagement and Trainings throughout the year. With feedback garnered from program participants, Vancro has changed some processes to be in better alignment with expectations. Program participants should expect a call back within 24 hours. Those requesting SSPs will be informed of the name of their SSP. These calls will go out weekly to program participants. Case managers will add an intake day to their schedule to be available to onboard new clients, weekly.

**Areas of consideration:**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, Vancro identified capacity concerns. With only 1.5 Case Managers serving 35 active clients, Vancro faces the challenge of maintaining effectiveness and availability while considering additional clients. Monitoring program capacity, especially regarding SSP services, will be crucial. Currently, nearly 90 participants benefit from SSP services, and with ambitions for statewide expansion, Vancro is wary of potential budgetary constraints that could affect service quality. They have taken heed of feedback advocating for clearer communication, leading to the implementation a 24-hour return call policy. Addressing role creep has also been identified as a priority for 2024/2025, and Vancro plans to tackle this issue through more targeted approaches. Looking to the future, Vancro has outlined several key goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Noteworthy initiatives include the rollout and testing of a Communication Facilitator Pilot, led by Mark Lucero-Muñoz, which will continue into FY25, as well as a self-advocacy training program in collaboration with the New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Additionally, a Haptics training workshop is scheduled for September of FY25, aimed at equipping DeafBlind individuals in New Mexico and their support network (including staff, SSPs, interpreters, and community members) with the requisite skills to be Haptics practitioners. The NMCDHH has noted, since the information reported above, Vancro has already surpassed the 90-participant number reaching a total of 94 active participants receiving services, with 4 additional participants going through the onboarding process. The number of requests continue to increase, and all analysis shows that Vancro will reach 100 individuals continually served before the end of FY25, which will almost double the size of the program compared to when Vancro initially became the vendor.

Other priorities for Vancro include SSP trainings in Las Cruces and throughout the state, organizing a resource tabling event, providing further training for current SSP staff, and expanding recruitment efforts for program participants statewide. These initiatives reflect Vancro's commitment to enhancing support and resources for the DeafBlind community across New Mexico.



*Vancro and NMCHDHH staff collaborated on a number of trainings and community meetings during FY24.*





## Telecommunications and Outreach

Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) is a service that the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides to the community throughout the state. The program consists of amplified phones, visual communication devices such as, the CapTel (captioned telephone) and iPads, along with a variety of accessories such as, notification systems, smoke alert systems, phone ringers, and personal assistive devices. The Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices have a testing/demo room where equipment is available for testing to community members who are curious about which devices might work best for their needs.

There are some updates regarding equipment for FY24. Some equipment has been removed due to discontinuation of products. These discontinued items include: the Clarity BT-914, Clarity D704, and Clarity CE50.

New equipment has been added, such as the Geemarc AmpliPower 60+, BeHear SmartO, and several variations of the iPhone14, equipped with Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and speech disabled packages, similar to the existing iPads that the program has had for several years. We have also added two new models of Electrolarynx, the Romet R700 and the Provox (Formerly Griffin Laboratories) Trutone Plus. Several devices have also been upgraded for the program, including the Serene 360QK, which is an improvement over the older model 360, and Sonic Alert devices, now labeled as HA360MKBR-II and HA360MK-II.

The catalogs and applications with these changes were made available in both English and Spanish editions, starting in the second quarter. The following equipment is available, with slight delays; Sonic Alert devices, Silent Call Medallions and the BeHear SmartO. However, there continue to be major delays for the CapTel 840.

Mr. Jason Siergey resigned from NMCDHH during the second quarter. After his departure, Executive Director Gomme, Ms. Gutiérrez, Mr. Stidham, Mr. Brennan, and Ms. Sandoval all worked together to streamline the TEDP system to provide for an effective transition for the new Technology Coordinator. Once the system was streamlined, Mr. Stidham's and Mr. Brennan's workloads continued to be heavily impacted, during the time between Mr. Siergey's departure, and the onboarding of Mr. Sean Sinderholm in December 2023, as they worked together to process and track incoming applications. Mr. Stidham went above and beyond in working with members of our community to address their equipment needs.

Prior to Mr. Sinderholm transitioning to taking over TEDP, Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Gomme did one last review of the program. Mr. Sinderholm then began reviewing and addressing any issues or errors, working with Mr. Stidham and Mr. Brennan to complete the transition successfully.

During the third quarter, Mr. 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. Siergey, and was able to help several of them complete their applications and receive equipment.

Mr. Sinderholm’s responsibilities also include procurement services for the agency, for which he completed all required training.

Mr. Sinderholm reorganized and cleaned out the TED Testing Room, for the purpose of testing equipment and scheduling consultations with individuals who have completed a TED application. The goal with the appointments is to provide a guided demonstration of the equipment in a space that is designed to enable consumers to test all the equipment effectively and decide which device best suits their hearing loss. The TED Testing Room officially opened its doors in the 4th Quarter and has been used for several consultations. Many more testers are expected in the upcoming Fiscal Year.

For the year, TEDP distributed a total of 1,349 pieces of equipment, exceeding our legislative measure.

<b>Phone</b>	<b>Total items distributed</b>
Clarity Alto	7
Clarity Alto Plus	8
Clarity D714	0
Clarity JV35	13
Clarity XLC2+	3
Clarity XLC8	58
Clarity XLC8 with GLT	77
ClearSounds A1600BT	0
ClearSounds CSC600ER	11
Panasonic KX-TGM430B	0
Panasonic KX-TGM450S	11
Geemarc Ampli550	0
Geemarc AmpliPower60+	41
CapTel 840	34
<b>iPad</b>	
Deaf Package	32
Hard of Hearing Package	112
Deaf-Blind Package	16
Speech Package	40
<b>iPad mini</b>	
Deaf Package	8

Hard of Hearing Package	40
Deaf-Blind Package	8
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>527</b>

<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Total items distributed</b>
Amplicom NL100 neckloop	0
Bellman Mino with neckloop	10
Bellman High Powered Neckloop (no device)	0
BeHear SMARTO	209
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	96
GLT	33
Provox® SolaTone® Plus	0
Provox® TruTone® EMOTE®	0
Provox® TruTone® Plus	0
ROMET® R700 Electronic Larynx	12
Krown RA 05 Amplified Ringer with Strobe	0
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA360QK	84
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA380	16
Serene Innovations RF-200 Alerting System	20
Serene Innovations SA-40 Cell Phone Amplifier	0
Serene Innovations UA-45 Universal Phone Amplifier	0

Silent Call Medallion Kit	108
SonicAlert HA360MKBR-II	208
Surge Protector (Phones and accessories)	21
<b>Total Accessories Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	822
<b>Total Overall Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	1349

### **Outreach Program**

NMCDHH attended numerous booths across the state to provide one-on-one information and one-stop education for equipment for telecommunications and information about our agency. Health and wellness fairs, food banks and school districts all over the state have proven to be positive places where participants learn more about the telecommunications equipment that NMCDHH provides. Information reaches every corner of the state from Alamogordo, Albuquerque, Anthony, Berino, Butterfield, Chaparral, Deming, Dona Ana, Garfield, Hatch, La Mesa, Las Cruces, Lordsburg, Mesquite, Radium Springs, Rincon, Rio Rancho, Ruidoso, Santa Fe, Silver City, Truth or Consequence (TORC), and rural towns in Southern New Mexico. For the year-to-date, the Albuquerque and Las Cruces office attended 111 booths with 6980 booth visitors. Mr. Stidham and Mr. Sinderholm from the Albuquerque office hosted 18 booth events and had 2,077 visitors at the events. Ms. Santillan from the Las Cruces office hosted 75 booth events and had 1,943 visitors at the events. Hamilton Relay, our state relay vendor also attended 17 booths and contributed 2,960 visitors to number of individuals who visited our booths at these events.

# Community Engagement

*Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement*

The Community Engagement Department provides a broad range of services to improve communication access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind residents of New Mexico. During fiscal year 2024, the department worked on a variety of projects and activities while continuing to supervise all direct contract signed language interpreters, apprentice interpreters, and other contractors. Full time staff members are:

- Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement
- Jessica Eubank, Communication Development Specialist
- Trevor Brennan, Community Engagement Specialist

The range of services provided by the Community Engagement department include:

## **Professional Development Opportunities for Signed Language Interpreters**

- New Mexico Mentoring
  - A structured, 16-week mentoring program for licensed New Mexico interpreters.
- Interpreter Apprentice Program
  - In-house professional development program for licensed and pre-certified interpreters.
- Professional Development Contracts
  - Statewide professional development opportunities via contracts with other individuals and entities for both interpreters and other service providers.
- Professional Development Collaboration
  - Collaboration with other New Mexico entities to provide coordinated interpreter professional development opportunities.

## **Information Regarding Communication Access**

- Signed Language Interpreter Licensure
  - Answer questions from interpreters and the community about New Mexico Interpreter Licensure requirements and processes.
  - Serve as the liaison from NMCDHH to the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB).
  - Serve on various subcommittees.
- Interpreter Referral Information
  - Provide information to the community regarding accessing the services of signed language interpreters.
- Captioning Referral Information
  - Provide information to the community regarding accessing real time captioning services.
- Fact Sheets on a broad range of communication access topics
  - Available for free download from our website. Existing Fact Sheets are regularly updated, and new ones are added as needed.

- Information and Referral
  - Respond to questions from the community providing resources for assistance.

### **Social Media and Website**

- Shared information with our constituents through our online presence including:
  - Website: [www.CDHH.nm.gov](http://www.CDHH.nm.gov)
  - Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NMCDHH](https://www.facebook.com/NMCDHH)
  - Twitter: [www.twitter.com/NMCDHH](https://www.twitter.com/NMCDHH)
  - Instagram: [www.instagram.com/nmcdhh/](https://www.instagram.com/nmcdhh/)
  - YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/NMCDHH](https://www.youtube.com/user/NMCDHH)
  - LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/new-mexico-commission-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing-96710628](https://www.linkedin.com/in/new-mexico-commission-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing-96710628)
  - Bi-weekly email newsletter using the MailChimp platform.

### **Communication Access**

- Provide communication access services for NMCDHH staff at meetings, presentations, outreach events, and when providing client services in our offices or at off-site locations, both in-person and remotely.

### **Special Projects**

- Coordinated a variety of special projects to increase our constituents' access to legal, behavioral health, and other services.

### **NMCDHH Library**

- Resources available for loan statewide with the collection included in an online database: <https://NMCDHH.librarika.com>.

### **Information Technology**

- The Community Engagement Specialist is the point of contact for Information Technology issues and is the liaison between NMCDHH and the state Department of Information Technology (DoIT).

### **Human Resources**

- All agency human resources functions are provided by the Director of Community Engagement.

### **Community Engagement Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2024**

- The Community Engagement Department was fully staffed. Mr. Trevor Brennan was transitioned from the Administrative Operations Specialist position in September 2023, but continued to perform his previous duties until that position was filled. By the end of the fiscal year, he had fully transitioned to his new duties.
- The NMCDHH website remained an information-sharing hub on a broad range of topics. Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan made ongoing changes and improvements to the website.

- The NMCDHH Fact Sheets on the website were regularly updated, including the addition of several new Fact Sheets covering new topics. Ms. Eubank, Mr. Brennan, and Ms. Dignan all contributed to this work with input from several other staff members. Phone calls requesting resources often lead to referring callers to our website to download a particular Fact Sheet. To make this easier, a section of the website on the front page was repurposed to promote the Fact Sheet page.
- Shared a broad variety of information on social media and through the email newsletter. Information shared meetings and events, open captioned movies in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces, webinars, job postings, resources, and other information of interest to our constituents.
- The Ask the Expert email form on the website and the [NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov](mailto:NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov) email address are important access points for constituents to submit questions. Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan answered questions or routed them to the appropriate staff member. In FY24, there were 166 messages sent to the agency via email or the Ask the Expert form. In most cases, requests were responded to by a staff member within one business day.
- Additionally, Mr. Brennan assisted many community members by phone. The new Administrative Operations Specialist, Ms. Renee Bregar, joined in April and took over answering the agency phones. Mr. Brennan and Ms. Bregar received 544 phone calls in FY24.
- Between emails and phone calls, Mr. Brennan and Ms. Bregar addressed 1051 communication barriers. Many additional barriers were addressed by Ms. Dignan and other staff members. The most frequent information requests addressed by Mr. Brennan and Ms. Bregar included:
  - Financial assistance for hearing aids.
  - Information about the TEDP program.
  - How to find a signed language interpreter.
  - Who pays for interpreting services.
  - Requests for community advocacy assistance.
  - Information about hearing aids.
  - Interpreter licensure questions.
  - Affordable internet access.
  - Assistive technology.
  - Behavioral health resources.
  - Presentation requests.
  - ASL classes.
- The social media reach grew further in FY24. At the end of the fiscal year, NMCDHH had:
  - 1,830 followers on Facebook
  - 431 followers on Twitter
  - 219 followers on Instagram
  - 111 subscribers on YouTube
  - 227 connections on LinkedIn
  - 346 subscribers to the MailChimp email newsletter

- Except for the website, all of the platforms on which NMCDHH engages the community are used at no cost to the agency.
- Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan worked together to create a QR code to use at booth events that directs visitors to the Commission website when the QR code is scanned. Use of this QR code at community events is another approach to broadening the ability to reach the community while also saving on natural resources and printing costs.
- Continued to promote booth events that are open to the public in advance, to encourage constituents to visit. 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.
- Continued to share information about Community Education presentations. Mr. Robb provided photos from his presentations which were shared to social media along with a link to the revised Community Education page and an invitation to request presentations ([www.cdhh.nm.gov/advocacy/community-education](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov/advocacy/community-education)).
- Added new patrons to the library database by Mr. Brennan when requested. The NMCDHH Library is available to constituents statewide. The online library can be accessed at <https://NMCDHH.librarika.com> where people can view all the library materials, reserve items, and review their loan history. In FY24, four patrons borrowed six items from the collection. The current total of registered users is 116.
- Attended several trainings and workshops, and provided presentations for several groups:
  - Ms. Dignan and Ms. Eubank delivered professional development opportunities to 120 signed language interpreters from New Mexico through various workshops and programs.
  - Ms. Dignan and Ms. Eubank provided training for soon-to-be graduates of the University of New Mexico (UNM) Sign Language Interpreting Program (SLIP) on topics related to professional development opportunities, the NMCDHH Apprentice Program, New Mexico Mentoring, New Mexico Interpreter Licensure, and the New Mexico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.
  - Ms. Eubank taught Demand Control Schema for Ethical Decision Making to the senior practicum students in the UNM SLIP. This was a 4-hour lecture across 2 sessions that discussed in depth the Code of Professional Conduct, Demand Control Schema for decision-making as interpreters, and ethical scenarios that students will encounter in their work as interpreters.
  - Mr. Brennan attended UNM SLIP Vision Day in support of new interpreting program applicants.
  - Ms. Dignan and Ms. Eubank attended the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) National Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. Ms. Dignan attended workshops and the business meeting where several issues of importance to New Mexico interpreters were discussed. Ms. Eubank attended to represent New Mexico interpreters and in the capacity of the RID Region IV Representative-Elect.
  - Ms. Eubank attended several Town Halls and national level interpreter meetings hosted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf to discuss a wide range of topics related to the interpreting field.



- Ms. Eubank participated in the RID Affiliate Chapter Leadership Summit. This was a two-day virtual conference that discussed how to enhance interpreters' leadership efficacy within their communities.
- Mr. Brennan attended several webinars including: Navigating Legal and Technological Developments related to the interpreting field; Over the Counter (OTC) Hearing Aids hosted by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) in collaboration with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); Older Americans Act hosted by Deaf Seniors of America and the Arizona Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Legislative Performance Measure training hosted by New Mexico DFA; and events covering technology in the workplace.
- Mr. Brennan and Ms. Gutierrez attended the New Mexico Inclusive Post Secondary Education Conference hosted by NMSD.
- Mr. Brennan virtually attended the Symposium on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Sign Language Interpreting hosted by the Advisory Group on AI and Sign Language Interpreting and is now a member of the Task Force.

**Ms. Dignan's accomplishments included:**

- Worked closely with the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB) through several transitions:
  - The NM-PLUS online system: The implementation of the new NM-PLUS online system for all SLIPB applications and renewals, followed by identifying information that was missing from the database after the migration. This involved extensive communication with and data gathering from the interpreting community. While there were some glitches during implementation, the online system has resulted in vast improvements in the application and renewal process.
  - Resolving issues of interpreters not receiving their paper or photo ID licenses following renewals and explaining to SLIPB staff the importance of the photo ID licenses for interpreters.
  - All of these changes resulted in higher than usual numbers of questions about licensure qualifications and the application process. Ms. Dignan answered questions, generally within an hour of receiving them, and updated Fact Sheets on these topics to make the information readily available.
  - The SLIPB met in April and asked Ms. Dignan to share an announcement with the community regarding reinstatements and the extensions that were approved during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also streamlined the process for approvals of requests for reinstatements and extensions. These two actions have resulted in several New Mexico interpreters coming back to the field.
- New Mexico Mentoring:
  - There were no applications for the Fall 2023 Session of New Mexico Mentoring, so it was cancelled. When New Mexico Mentoring was established, it was the only opportunity of its kind in New Mexico. However, currently there are a broad array of programs. That, coupled with the

significantly smaller pool of interpreters graduating from training programs, resulted in a much smaller pool of potential applicants.

- We consciously decided to not run a Spring 2024 session of New Mexico Mentoring and instead to focus on creating alternative mentoring experiences that fit learning styles different from the original model. This project has proven to be more extensive than originally planned for and will be continuing into FY25.
- Collaborated with the State Purchasing Department to complete the new Statewide Price Agreement (SPA) for signed language interpreting services that 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.
- Assisted several entities, based on their requests, regarding improvement of communication access, information sharing, and with licensure requirements, including:
  - Arizona Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - Counseling providers
  - Interpreter referral agencies and staffing agencies
  - Las Cruces Public Schools
  - Las Vegas Schools
  - Law Offices
  - Maxcare, Inc.
  - Museum of International Folk Art
  - New Mexico Chamber of Commerce
  - New Mexico Department of Health
  - New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
  - New Mexico State Independent Living Council
  - Private Festivals and Events
  - San Juan College
  - Santa Fe Schools
  - Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board Administrator and Staff
  - Thentia Staffing
  - United States District Court, District of New Mexico
  - Workforce Connections

**Mr. Brennan's accomplishments included:**

- Transitioned fully into his full role as Community Engagement Specialist, while still supporting ASD through their multiple staffing changes. After being a member of that department for three years before being promoted to his new role, he was uniquely qualified to assist both departments.

- Trained on additional programs used in his new role, and handled most of the social media, website, and biweekly email newsletter.
- Answered questions regarding interpreter licensure. Mr. Brennan is the current Chair of the SLIPB, so he is able to answer most questions and refers to others as needed.
- Worked with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) on several projects, prepared equipment for new staff, addressed numerous technical difficulties, and assisted with the installation of a new office Xerox machine.
- Traveled to the Las Cruces office and ensured Mx. Dahlgren was properly set up and able to use their equipment when they began working for the Commission in Las Cruces
- The Governor issued an Executive Order mandating all agencies to examine their IT info/infrastructure and address any security vulnerabilities. This requires greater monitoring. With no formal IT department, this mandate increased the demand of IT responsibilities on Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme. This mandate has increased communication with DoIT staff to appropriately set up protections for the agency, however, there continue to be communication access barriers to be addressed.
- Worked with Mr. Gomme and monitored the rapidly increasing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the world, and how they impact operations of the Commission and the constituents it serves. This trend closely tied into ever-heightening cybersecurity concerns that governments have on both the state and national level.
- Met virtually with an AI technology company that is currently developing an AI tool to create captioned media content. Mr. Brennan shared his own experiences as a Hard of Hearing person who has been a consumer of captioned media for most of his life. Additionally, he discussed 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.
- Worked closely with Mr. Gomme to establish a viable method for the June NMCDHH Board meeting, conducted as a hybrid. The commitment to access for all during this meeting required Mr. Gomme and Mr. Brennan to dedicate many hours to research, learn, and test the necessary dedicated equipment which included audio, visual, and streaming software/hardware. This work also had to incorporate budget and personnel considerations, which meant Mr. Brennan had increased responsibilities during hybrid board meetings becoming a “hybrid” cameraman, audio technician, and streaming coordinator. This was possible due to the addition of our new Administrative Operations Specialist, who was able to assist Mr. Brennan during these meetings. This work was an overall net positive for the agency, as what was learned and incorporated into agency technological abilities will also be used to enhance work in other areas such as outreach and advocacy. The main objective for the hybrid meeting was to make it accessible for those in attendance in-person and those watching online. To meet this goal there were many challenges that had to be overcome in the realms of internet accessibility, audio and visual conflict resolution, camera management, and equipment reliability. One of the key pieces of equipment that made this meeting successful was an omni-directional microphone that allowed for a single audio source, which resulted in the resolution of an audio feedback issue

that required several weeks to troubleshoot. The meeting was a success from an accessibility and proof of capability standpoint. The success of this meeting required involvement from almost all staff at the Commission at one point or another, which is a positive reflection on the strong team that has been built at the Commission and how, by filling vacant positions, the Commission staff were able to expand capabilities and the ability to serve the people of New Mexico. It should be noted that there were no attendees from the general public who attended the meeting in-person. However, there were a significant number of views of the meeting livestream at the time of and following the meeting.

**Ms. Eubank's accomplishments included:**

- Worked on several ongoing projects related to the field of interpreting, both locally and nationally in FY24.
- Served as the President of the New Mexico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NMRID) since 2021, then was appointed as the Region IV Representative on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Board. Region IV includes 11 states from the central region of the United States (including New Mexico). In this capacity, Ms. Eubank serves as a representative for these states in conversations about interpreting on the national level as well as provided advocacy and resources to the states within Region IV.
- Worked with two Apprentice Interpreters who engaged in professional development throughout the year.
- Proctored the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Written Test. There are no other proctors for this exam in New Mexico, and passing the EIPA is a requirement to hold the New Mexico Educational Interpreter License. Ms. Eubank coordinated with the UNM Language Learning Center on creating a testing location for the exam by downloading and testing secure software capable of running the EIPA testing programs to the Language Learning Center's computers. She also coordinated with staff to find lab availability to proctor the exam. The Commission was grateful to the UNM staff who partnered with us to provide a space capable of running multiple tests concurrently. A total of nine interpreters took the test this year.
- In order to provide interpreting services for our Executive Director during the Legislative Session, Ms. Eubank remained available to go to the Roundhouse as needed.
- Assisted the interpreting community in understanding the ongoing transition of the interpreter certification exams through the Center for Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation (CASLI).
- Helped connect the RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) Board of Directors to New Mexico RID (NMRID) for a series of board and membership meetings 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.
- Represented NMCDHH as an interpreter coordinator stakeholder at the UNM panel presentations. These panels are an annual capstone event for the graduating seniors in the Signed Language Interpreting Program. It is an opportunity for them to

showcase their interpreting skills to stakeholders in our community and to receive feedback. The interactions between Ms. Eubank and the graduating seniors were very positive and led to a significant number of applications for the Apprentice Interpreter Program for next fiscal year.

- Invested significant time in coordinating interpreting services for our first hybrid Board Meeting for NMCDHH, testing visual and auditory accessibility, and preparing for the hybrid meeting. The hybrid meeting also required a larger team of interpreters than is necessary for a virtual meeting, which created an increase in interpreting hours and increased cost.
- NMCDHH provided over 510 hours of interpreting services this year, all coordinated by Ms. Eubank. This includes services provided by Ms. Eubank, direct contract interpreters, referral agencies, and Ms. Dignan.

In addition to the above, Ms. Eubank successfully led another cohort of Apprentice Interpreters. Those activities included:

- Created professional development plans that reflect the current goals of two new Apprentice Interpreters, as well as utilized the skills that they already possess. Because both FY24 Apprentices already had some experience in the field, their professional development needs were different than traditional Apprentices who work with us after graduating from an Interpreter Training Program.
- Implemented a new training series with apprentices that target specific interpreting skills, based on the training she received through the Interpreting Pedagogy program. These skills include working collaboratively with a team, providing feedback and strategies for debriefing, strategies for increasing conceptual accuracy in interpretation, and strategies for sight translation. Former apprentices who have successfully completed the Apprentice Interpreter Program were also invited to attend these meetings.
- Worked with experienced interpreters in our community to provide professional development opportunities to the apprentices that cover a wider range of the field of interpreting than Ms. Eubank alone can provide.
- Supervised successful completion of the apprentice program by both apprentices. Apprentices engaged in over 100 hours of observation, interpreting, and professional development. The shortage of interpreters impacted this number as both apprentices had limited availability for the agency since they were busy serving members of the community.
- Received multiple applications for the Apprentice Interpreter Program in FY25, with an increase of 300% more than the previous fiscal year. This increase in applications is believed to be due in part to Ms. Eubank's positive interactions with students at the UNM panels.
- Selected four apprentices for FY25. Three are based in the Albuquerque area, and one is based in southern New Mexico.
- Four former apprentices achieved National Interpreter Certification from RID in FY24.

## **Human Resources Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2024**

In addition to program work, Ms. Dignan was the Director of Human Resources for the agency. The FY24 budget allowed vacant positions to be filled. Accomplishments in this area included:

- The vacant Community Advocacy position was posted and filled by Mx. Jennifer Dahlgren in Las Cruces.
- The vacant Community Engagement Specialist position was posted and filled by Mr. Brennan.
- The vacant Business Operations Specialist position was posted and filled by Ms. Vairea Rice.
- The vacant Financial Services Specialist position was posted and filled by Ms. Dinise Rodriguez.
- A vacant position was reclassified to Program Coordinator and became the new Technology Coordinator position, which was posted and filled by Mr. Sean Sinderholm.
- The Administrative Operations Specialist position that covers the Front Desk was left vacant when Mr. Brennan transferred. It was posted and filled by Ms. Renee Bregar.
- The resignation and exit process for Mr. Jason Siergey was completed.
- The retirement and exit process for Ms. Rodriguez was completed.
- The vacant Financial Services Specialist position was posted, and Ms. Rice was promoted into the position.
- The then vacant Business Operations Specialist position was posted at the end of the fiscal year.
- Processed in-band pay increases for staff members per state requirements.
- Completed evaluations for all staff and managers by the end of the fiscal year.
- The Employee Benefit Bureau provided interpreters for Open Enrollment webinars without being asked. This speaks to the success of past advocacy for access.
- Distributed and released the revised Governor's Code of Conduct to the staff.
- Updated the Employee Handbook and distributed to the staff.
- Updated the agency Organizational Chart to reflect current positions and employees.
- 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, the number of NMCDHH staff who participated 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 attended the Capstone session.
  - 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.

- Four staff members attended the Request for Proposals Training offered by the State Purchasing Division (SPD).
- Completed all the preparation for the 3% FY25 Legislative Pay increases communicated with staff about what to expect.

*FY24  
Apprentices*



**ALICIA TRUJILLO**

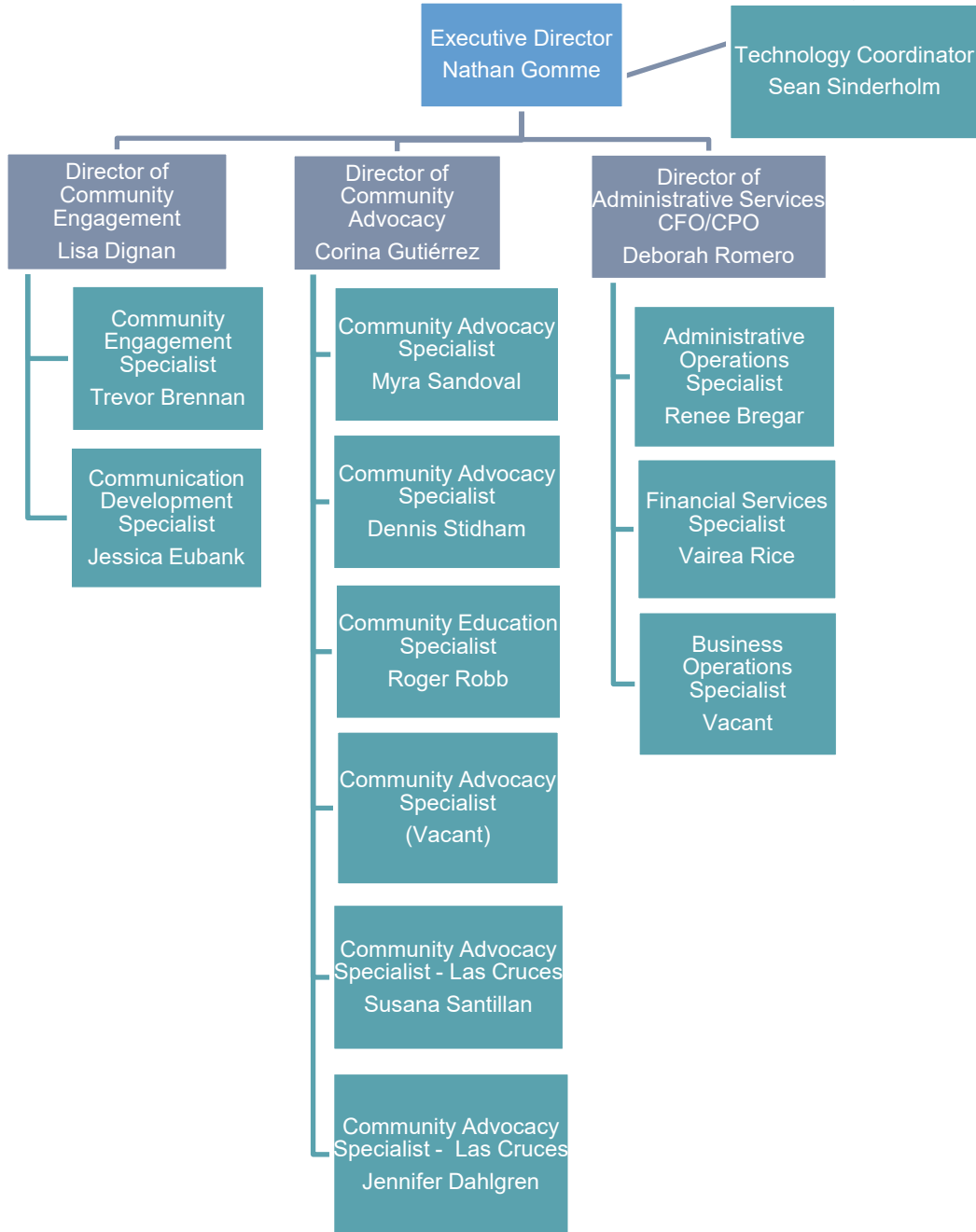


**DYLAN LORRAINE**



# NMCDHH Organizational Chart

as of June 30, 2024





## Staff Members

### *G. Nathan Gomme, Executive Director*

G. Nathan Gomme began his career with NMCDHH as a Service Coordinator in November 2008, and later became the Director of the Public Policy and Advocacy Department. In April of FY14, he was selected to be Executive Director after an extensive nationwide search. Originally from Connecticut, Mr. Gomme holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Gallaudet University where he graduated with University Honors. A resident of New Mexico since 2005, Mr. Gomme has a wealth of experience in transition issues, advocacy, and ADA compliance, and has proven his leadership skills both within the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and in the community through several projects with partner agencies.



### *Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement*

Lisa Dignan directs the Community Engagement Department and programs focused on the professional development of signed language interpreters, including New Mexico Mentoring. She administers a variety of programs to improve communication access for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing by increasing the pool of highly skilled interpreters. She works closely with the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board on issues around licensure of interpreters and served seven years on the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts Language Access Advisory Committee. Lisa has served as the Interim Executive Director of NMCDHH on two separate occasions. Lisa is a California native who has lived in seven different states and relocated to Albuquerque in 2007 after serving as the disability services coordinator at Laramie County Community College in Wyoming for 13 years. A nationally certified interpreter with over 35 years of experience and a lengthy history in the independent living movement, Lisa earned a master's degree in adult education from the University of Wyoming and holds RID certifications in interpretation and transliteration.



## *Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy*



Corina Gutiérrez is a New Mexico native from Hatch, the “Chile Capital of the World.” Corina attended the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) for most of her education. She is a renowned basketball player who was part of the Deaflympics women’s basketball team and is one of three inductees to the Wall of Fame at NMSD. She received a bachelor’s degree in physical education from Gallaudet University. Corina previously worked at NMSD, her alma mater, as a Student Life Educator, and worked at the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind as a Master Teaching Parent. She has served as the American Sign Language Coordinator and teacher at the Deaf Culture Center and has served on the New Mexico Association for the Deaf Board of Directors, as an advisory board member for Gallaudet University Regional Center – Southwest, as a board member for National Council of Hispano Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Council de Manos, and Raíces del Rio Grande. Corina is currently serving as a board member for the NMSD Alumni Association and the New Mexico Mano a Mano. Corina joined NMCDHH in August of 2007. She plans, advocates and coordinates services to meet her clients’ needs. In FY14, Corina became Interim Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, and in FY15, became Director of Public Policy & Advocacy. The Public Policy & Advocacy Department is now the Community Advocacy Department, and Corina remains Director of that department.

## *Deborah Romero, Director of Administration Services, CFO & CPO*

Deborah Romero is a New Mexico native from Santa Fe. She is currently the Chief Financial Officer. She has over 24 years in government service. Prior to her career in government, Deborah was the director of a private school. She is a member of NMPPA, New Mexico Public Procurement Association. She attended New Mexico State Cooperative Extension, NM-EDGE and is a Certified Public Purchasing Professional PPP and Certified Public Officer, CPO. Deborah also attended the University of New Mexico and is a Certified Emergency Medical Technician and former volunteer firefighter.



### *Renee Bregar, Administrative Operations Specialist*



Renée is the Administrative Operations Specialist and is responsible for administrative support for the Albuquerque and Las Cruces NMCDHH offices, as well as the NMCDHH Board.

Renée brings over 30 years' experience in customer service within multiple industries in Ohio, Indiana, and Texas. Her education initially focused on mental health technology, then ASL.

Renée and her wife of over 24 years, who is Deaf, have recently moved to New Mexico. Renée is passionate about service to others. She is honored and excited to be able to serve the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities in New Mexico, as well as the amazing NMCDHH team.

### *Trevor Brennan, Community Engagement Specialist*

Trevor Brennan is a New Mexico native from Edgewood who became Hard-of-Hearing at age 10. He is a graduate of the New Mexico School for the Deaf. He has an associate's degree in integrated studies from Central New Mexico Community College, and also has certifications in general business and payroll clerk. He has served as the Treasurer for the NM Association for the Deaf in the past and is passionate about helping others.



Trevor has over 15 years of customer service experience from a variety of industries at the local, county, and state level. Trevor first worked for the Commission as a Mentor for New Mexico Mentoring starting in 2020 and joined the full-time staff in 2021 as the Administrative Operations Specialist, before being transferred to Community Engagement Specialist in 2023.

### *Jennifer Dahlgren, Community Advocacy Specialist*



Jennifer has worked in the field of communication access, education, interpreting and advocacy for more than 15 years with a passion for the empowerment that comes through communication. They have trained countless service providers and students in the medical, legal, educational, social services and business fields. They have presented both nationally and internationally to audiences large and small, and actively engages in advocating for the communication access rights for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and

DeafDisabled so that they can function independently and equitably in society. Additionally, Jennifer advocates for the intersectional needs of the LGBTQ+ and Deaf communities.

Jennifer believes education is the key to access and equality. By educating service providers, students and leaders about the rights and needs of marginalized communities, we make the world a more equitable place. Jennifer is Deaf-Queer native American Sign Language user who utilizes interpreters in their everyday life. Jennifer firmly believes that when you know better you do better. So, they do their part to spread a little more knowledge about the Deaf culture so that the world is a more equitable place for all Deaf people whatever their intersecting identities may be.

### *Jessica Eubank, Communication Development Specialist*

Jessica Eubank is a native of Belen, New Mexico. Jessica holds degrees from the University of New Mexico in Signed Language Interpretation and Psychology. She also holds her National Interpreter Certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, as well as her Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment qualification in K-12 education. She has specialized training in performing arts interpreting and interpreting for religious settings.



A former NMCDHH apprentice herself, Jessica is excited to now supervise the NMCDHH Apprentice Interpreter Program and is dedicated to fostering professional growth and opportunity for our local community. Jessica both provides and coordinates interpreting services for NMCDHH staff and agency needs.

### *Vairea Rice, Financial Services Specialist*



Vairea Rice was born and raised in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She has been Hard of Hearing since she was 3 years old and has thrived in mainstream public schools with the help of talented and proactive educators, speech therapists, audiologists, and hearing-assistive technology such as hearing aids, FM systems, and relay services. Her grandmother, Daisy N. Rice, was one of the delegates who conceived and wrote the first drafts of the ADA articles in 1990 and, in 1991, helped establish the NMCDHH.

Vairea received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Accounting and a Master of Science in Accounting from Western Governor's University in Utah. Vairea strongly believes in unity between Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and hearing communities by allowing for many forms of access to education, language, and communication for all individuals. Vairea started with the Commission as the Business Operations Specialist in October 2023 and was promoted to Financial Services Specialist in May 2024.

### *Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist*

Roger is an Albuquerque native who is very happy to be living in Albuquerque once again after living in California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. To quote Dorothy from “The Wizard of Oz”, “There’s no place like home!” With a 15-year history in Advocacy and Case Management at Deaf and Hard of Hearing agencies in the aforementioned states, Roger brings a wealth of experience to the NMCDHH. Roger graduated from the New Mexico School for the Deaf and majored in Sociology at Point Loma Nazarene College in San Diego



### *Dinise Rodriguez, Financial Services Specialist*



Dinise is a New Mexico native from Albuquerque’s South Valley. She has worked for State government since May 1997 and has over 25 years of experience in finance. She has worked for a variety of state agencies during this time including Aging and Long-Term Services, Motor Vehicle Division, and Children Youth and Families Division. She is married to an Albuquerque Police Department Commander and has 5 children and one grandchild. Dinise worked for NMCDHH from October to April 2024.

### *Myra Sandoval, Community Advocacy Specialist*

Myra Sandoval was born in Albuquerque and grew up in Los Lunas. She is the third generation of a Deaf family and was also the third generation to graduate from the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD). She received her Associate degree in Laboratory Science at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), then completed her bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Phoenix. Ms. Sandoval has had experience working in the mental health field as Behavior Health Technician and has experience working with DeafBlind, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing communities as a Service Coordinator.



## *Susana Santillan, Community Advocacy Specialist*

Susana Santillan is a Community Advocacy Specialist in our Las Cruces office. Susana has a long history serving individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. Before coming to NMCDHH, she was the Deafness Resource Specialist for Volar Center for Independent Living, the Deafness Resources Specialist for Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) and served in the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Disabled Student Services Office. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Service presented the Community Member “Diamond Amigo Award” to Susana in October 2015. Susana is trilingual in English, Spanish, and ASL. She is the proud mother of four children, one of whom is a DeafBlind adult with Usher Syndrome. Due to her daughter’s deafness, Susana has been involved in the Deaf community for 32 years.



## *Jason Siergey, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Specialist*

Jason Siergey is originally from Chicago, Illinois, and received his degrees from the National Technological Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York and DeVry University. Jason has 20 years of experience in the Information Technology field and has combined that with his interest in Human Services to best serve the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Speech Disabled of New Mexico. He has worked with the citizens of New Mexico on what our Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) has to offer and how the devices benefit them. He has distributed over a thousand pieces of equipment each year since taking the position in July 2011. His consumers are thrilled when they can communicate with the outside world, especially with their family members. Jason left NMCDHH in November of 2023.



## *Sean Sinderholm, Technology Coordinator*



Sean Sinderholm is the Technology Coordinator for NMCDHH, and his responsibilities include coordinating the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP). Throughout his career, Sean has had formative and professional experiences in Deaf-centric services for Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing and Hearing. He has worked as a Deaf Interpreter, Supportive Services Provider, Co-Navigator, Advocate, and Administrative Assistant. Recently, he moved to Albuquerque from his childhood home, Southern California, and is looking forward to making his mark in New Mexico.

## *Dennis Stidham, Community Advocacy Specialist*

Dennis Stidham is a Community Advocacy Specialist in NMCDHH's Albuquerque office. Dennis has 14 years of experience working with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing throughout the Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Belen, and Santa Fe areas. Dennis is originally from Arizona but has been a resident of New Mexico since 2003. Dennis is married and they have four children. His wife, Suella, is also Deaf.







# Board of Commissioners

## *Mr. John Hooper – Chair, Deaf or Hard of Hearing Representative of Northern NM*

John Hooper is a native New Mexican, born in Lovington. He attended and graduated from the New Mexico School for the Deaf. He received his associate's degree from the New Mexico Junior College in Hobbs and bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico. Mr. Hooper retired from the State of New Mexico in 2014 after working 25 years and 7 of those years he was employed with the NM Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Mr. Hooper is active in the community; he officiates middle and high school basketball and is the current President of the Hearing Loss Association of America Santa Fe Chapter. In the past, Mr. Hooper has been active on the New Mexico Relay Board and Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees).



## *Dr. Norm Dawson – Deaf/Hard of Hearing Professional*



Dr. Norm Dawson, a resident of New Mexico for over 61 years, became deaf at age 27. He learned sign language and graduated from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor of University Studies (BUS). He then earned a Bachelor of Science (BS) and a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Parker College of Chiropractic in Dallas, TX.

Throughout his life, Dr. Dawson has been a strong advocate for himself and others with hearing loss. His advocacy journey began at age 14 when he insisted that his father provide him with hearing aids. While attending UNM, he secured funding for the first TTY (Teletypewriter) in the library. With the assistance of the Department of Justice, he successfully lobbied for UNM to provide sign language interpreters for extracurricular activities, additional braille resources, and more wheelchair ramps. He also played a key role in the creation of the New Mexico Relay.

Currently, Dr. Dawson delivers educational seminars on reducing the risk of dementia associated with hearing loss and other lifestyle modifications, including nutrition and exercise. He is also a vocal advocate for organizations to provide closed captioning, both online and in person. Dr. Dawson has been self-employed for most of his life.

He is actively involved with the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)-Albuquerque chapter and serves on the New Mexico Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology, and

Hearing Aid Dispensers Board. Additionally, he currently serves as the President of the Albuquerque Challenge Toastmasters Club.

Dr. Dawson has been married for 44 years, and together with his spouse, they have five children, two of whom have hearing loss. They enjoy bike riding, traveling, and being involved in the community.

### *Dr. Jennifer Herbold – Superintendent of the New Mexico School for the Deaf*

Jennifer Herbold was born in Silver Spring, Maryland, a stone's throw from Washington DC where she was practically raised on the Gallaudet University campus. She received her B.A. degrees in English and Secondary Education in 1997, and her Master's in Deaf Education in 1999 from Gallaudet. Her first job in college was with the campus summer intern and conference housing program. As part of her job, she became familiar with the inner workings of the U.S. Capitol and politics. In 1995, she started working directly for the Secretary-General then President of the Deaflympics in various positions. During her six years with the Deaflympics, she acquired a wealth of experience in collaboration and organization, as well as love for working with people from international cultures.



Dr. Herbold was thrilled to move to New Mexico in 1999 where she reconnected to her family's southwestern roots and started her first full time career teaching English at the New Mexico School for the Deaf. During this time, she also attended the University of Arizona as a fourth-generation graduate where she earned her PhD in Language, Reading and Culture in 2008. She eventually became a literacy specialist, assistant principal, principal, and Director of Instruction. She currently is honored to be the school's Superintendent. When she isn't working, she enjoys reading, crocheting, working on various projects, traveling, and spending time with her husband, three children and the family Aussie.

### *Ms. Casey Stone-Romero – Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*



Casey Stone-Romero has been appointed by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to serve as the director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), effective January 10, 2022. With this appointment, Ms. Stone-Romero returns to the agency for which she worked from 1997 to 2014.

Stone-Romero's experience with NMDVR began as a receptionist and secretary. She quickly earned promotions to

training specialist, vocational rehabilitation technician, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and finally, staff development specialist.

Stone-Romero has worked for several other state agencies in addition to NMDVR, serving as community inclusion manager and statewide supported employment lead for the New Mexico Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, human resources analyst in the state's General Services Department, and training and development specialist in the State Personnel Office.

A life-long northern New Mexico resident, Ms. Stone-Romero and her husband Jason reside in Santa Fe with their son Tiger.

### *Dr. Meena Mann – President of New Mexico Association for the Deaf*



Dr. Meena Mann was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia. Throughout childhood, she attended Vancouver Oral Center, Jericho Hill School for the Deaf, and Kitsilano Secondary School. She has a BA in Psychology and Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision both from Gallaudet University, as well as an MS in Deaf Education from McDaniel College. In 2016, she received her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership with track specialization in Organizational Leadership.

Her passion is to share her expertise and knowledge in organizational leadership. She enjoys providing consultations to non-profit organizations. Meena is actively involved in local, state, and national organizations. She is currently the president of the New Mexico Association of the Deaf. In the past, she served as an Appointed Board Member of the National Association for the Deaf; Advisory Committee for Kentucky Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID); Organizational Advisor for Louisville Association for the Deaf; and ASL Advisory Committee for Nashville Community College.

Dr. Mann works as a Statewide Educational Consultant in the Outreach Department at New Mexico School for the Deaf. During her leisure time, she enjoys biking, hiking, and traveling. She resides in Santa Fe, NM with her husband, Bryce McMillan.

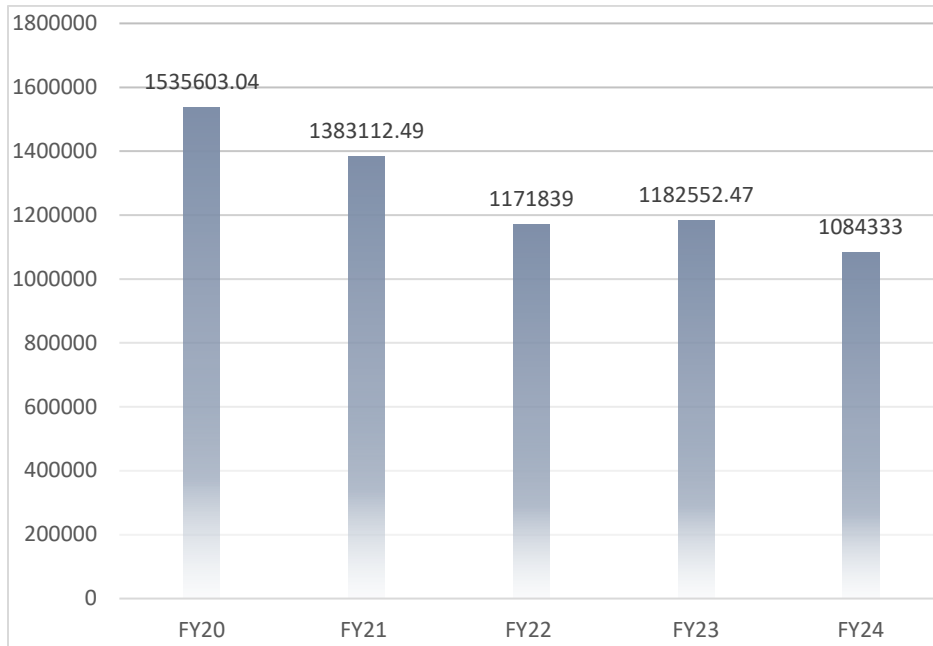


# Budget

FY24 Audited Expenditures At June 30, 2024				
Category		2024 Budget	Expenditures	% Expended
200	PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,613,400.00	1,173,957	72.76%
300	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	1,229,300.00	870,758	70.83%
400	OTHER	282,100.00	224,557	79.60%
500	OTHER FINANCING USES	116,500.00	116,500	100.00%
Total		3,241,300.00	2,385,772	73.61%

FY24 Collected Revenue July 2023 - June 2024		
Revenue Type	General Fund Allotment	TRS Revenue
Subtotal	\$1,651,700.00	\$1,084,333.00

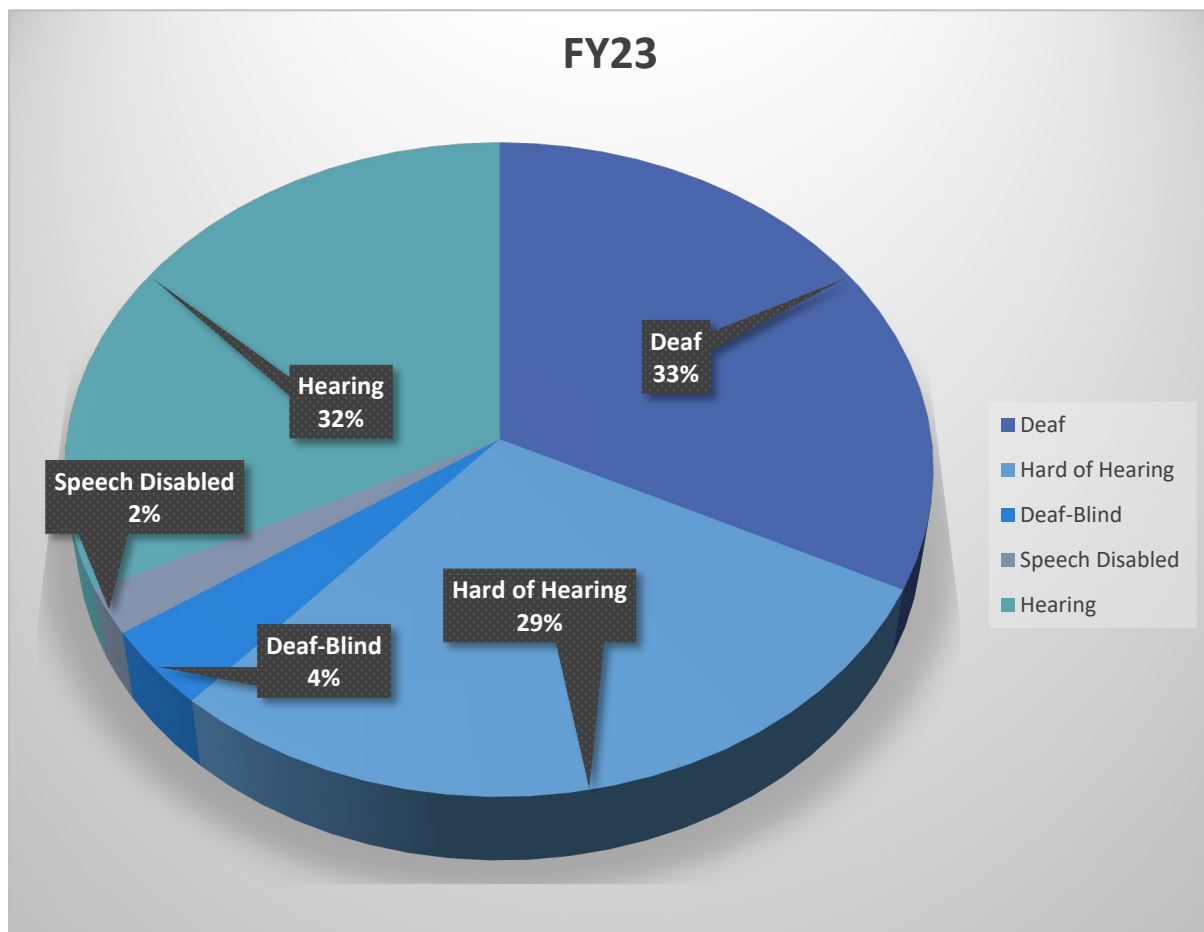
The graph below represents the revenue collected from the TR fund from FY20-FY24  
The TRS revenue continues to decline





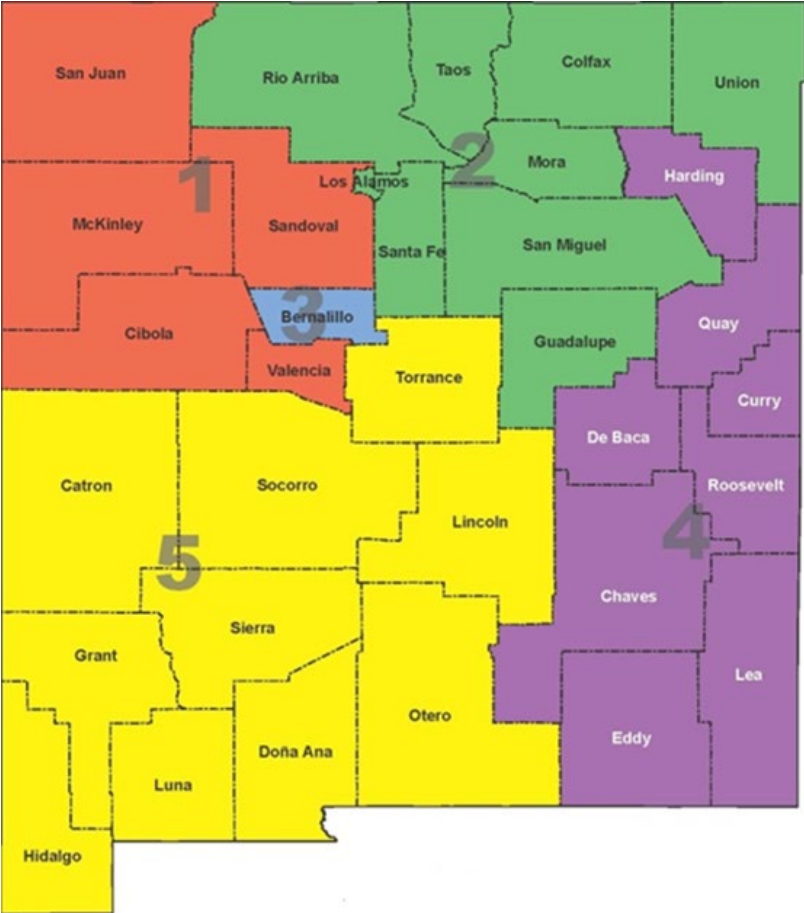
## Community Member Statistics

### *Community Members by Self-Identified Disability*



*NMCDHH Served 535 Individuals in FY23*

# Community Members by Region



<b>Region 1 – 53</b>
<b>Region 2 – 45</b>
<b>Region 3 – 248</b>
<b>Region 4 – 30</b>
<b>Region 5 – 159</b>



## Contact Information

### *Albuquerque Office*

NMCDHH  
505 Marquette Ave. NW  
Suite 1550  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

### *Phone Numbers*

Voice/TTY: 505.383.6530  
Video Phone: 505.435.9319  
Toll Free in NM: 800.489.8536  
Fax: 505.383.6533

### *Las Cruces Office*

NMCDHH  
Palms Office Complex  
2407 W. Picacho, Suite A-100  
Las Cruces, NM 88007

### *Phone Numbers*

Voice: 575.202.2814  
Video Phone: 575.541.3400  
Fax: 575.525.1039

*Website:* [www.cdhh.nm.gov](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov)

**Follow the New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

