

# New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing



## Quarterly Report FY24 Quarter 4



# FY24 Quarter 4 Board Report

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

*Quarterly Board Meeting  
Thursday, June 6, 2024  
3:00pm*

*The meeting was in person and the public could view the meeting livestream on  
YouTube with interpreting and captioning at  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpVQQsdO7ml](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpVQQsdO7ml)*

***DRAFT – These minutes will be subject to possible revision and approval by the  
commissioners at the next Board meeting on September 5, 2024.***

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

Chair John Hooper called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. Renee Bregar, Administrative Operations Specialist, called roll call.

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

Absent:

Quorum was met.

Seven staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director, Nathan Gomme; Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Deborah Romero; Director of Community Engagement, Lisa Dignan; Director of Community Advocacy, Corina Gutiérrez; Communication Development Specialist, Jessica Eubank; Community Engagement Specialist, Trevor Brennan; Administrative Operations Specialist, Renee Bregar.

Jessica Eubank interpreted the meeting along with Rhonda Hall, Jacqueline Trujillo, Amy Bourque and Melissa Leslie-Urist. Tracy Ukura from Partners Interpreting LLC. provided CART transcription. Assistant Attorney General, Leslie Padilla, was also present.

Executive Director Gomme introduced the new Administrative Operations Specialist, Renee Bregar during roll call.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Hooper asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**24.11**  
Commissioner Herbold made a motion to approve the agenda as written.  
Commissioner Mann seconded.  
Ms. Bregar took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dawson – Yes	Commissioner Herbold – Yes
Commissioner Hooper – Yes	Commissioner Mann – Yes
Commissioner Stone-Romero - Yes	

Motion passed unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF March 7, 2024 MINUTES**

Commissioner Hooper asked if there were any changes to the minutes from March 7, 2024. Mr. Hooper, made a correction to the statement that he attended the NMAD meeting in Las Cruces; which he did not attend.

**24.12**  
Commissioner Mann made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.  
Commissioner Dawson seconded.  
Ms. Bregar took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dawson – Yes	Commissioner Herbold – Yes
Commissioner Hooper – Yes	Commissioner Mann – Yes
Commissioner Stone-Romero - Yes	

Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Welcome Deaf and Hard of Hearing Professional, Dr. Norm Dawson**

Commissioner Dawson stated that he became Deaf at age 27. He then learned ASL and has been involved in the community since that time. He received one Cochlear implant 25 years ago and the second 10 years ago.

Executive Director Gomme stated there is board position open for a Deaf or Hard of Hearing parent from southern New Mexico and discussion have begun with an individual who may fill the role.

**V. Welcome Assistant Attorney General, Leslie Padilla**

Ms. Padilla is recently back in state government and looks forward to working with the Commission. Ms. Padilla will be conducting training with the board in future meetings.

**VI. Discussion of the Evaluation of the Executive Director**

Commissioners discussed the ongoing development of a process to evaluate the executive director's performance, if the evaluation should be held in a closed or open meeting, and clarified when action should take place and what the next steps would be with Ms. Padilla joining as legal counsel. Completion of an evaluation for the Executive Director will be on the agenda for the September meeting.

**24.13**

Commissioner Herbold moved that the executive director's evaluation be added to the agenda for September meeting.

Commissioner Mann seconded.

Ms. Bregar took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dawson – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Stone-Romero - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

**VII. REPORTS**

**a. Executive Director Report**

Mr. Gomme discussed the Support Service Providers (SSP) program and the current sole source procurement for a 4-year commitment being negotiated with the potential vendor. He confirmed additional funding will be available for communication facilitators to allow service expansion into Deaf senior and Deaf plus communities including rural areas. Mr. Gomme also discussed the Older Americans Act which

will allow direct caregiver support, beyond interpreters, for seniors. There was some discussion among the commissioners regarding a communication access fund as a potential access solution in the future.

Mr. Gomme noted that Traditional Relay Service (TRS) numbers are consistent. However, Caption Telephone Service (CTS) is down 73%. CTS is based on analog technology. Current telephones lines do not support analog technology; they process information differently, via Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). The funds received from TRS are mandated to be used for TRS. Those numbers continue to decline, which is concerning to Mr. Gomme. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) needs to decide next steps. The legislative language for funding needs to be changed.

**b. Department Reports Q & A**

**Community Engagement**

Ms. Lisa Dignan complimented Mr. Trevor Brennan on all the work required for the hybrid meeting. She noted that he is responsible for much of the information technology within the Commission as well as training the new ASD staff on his former duties. She noted that Mr. Brennan has been named chair of the state licensure board.

Ms. Dignan mentioned that Mr. Gomme has now served 10 years as Executive Director of NMCDHH.

She said there are 4 new interpreter apprentices accepted to the program for the next Fiscal Year, one of whom is in Las Cruces.

The mentoring program was paused but is currently accepting applications for the fall 2024 session.

Ms. Dignan stated that NMCDHH has been in this building for about 10 years. She and the CDHH team are working with building management, Lotus, toward lease renewal. Lotus has made improvements and been very responsive.

Ms. Dignan also shared that several apprentices from recent years have become nationally certified.

In terms of human resource responsibilities, Ms. Dignan noted the onboarding of Ms. Bregar, the retirement of Ms. Rodriguez from the Financial Services Specialist position, and the subsequent promotion of Ms. Vairea Rice to Financial Services Specialist. Interviews for the vacated Business Operations Specialist position are scheduled at the end of June.

Finally, Ms. Dignan confirmed that employee and manager evaluations are in process and will be completed by the June 30, 2024 deadline.

## **Community Advocacy**

Ms. Corina Gutiérrez stated there was a significant increase in the number of support needs in the third quarter, with some of that increase coming from more rural areas of New Mexico.

Work with Vancro continued successfully, with referrals between them and NMCDHH based on the need defined. Vancro provided workshops and training sessions for SSPs.

The Commission continued to work with healthcare providers toward communication access. Work is in process with University of New Mexico Health (UNMH) system and Presbyterian health. Mr. Gomme mentioned UNMH's previous town hall and its impact on policies and the community. Communication barriers within Lovelace are being addressed. There was also discussion of work with St. Vincent's in Santa Fe. There was discussion among the commissioners about language access in healthcare settings. Mr. Gomme confirmed that NMCDHH has collaborated with Disability Rights of New Mexico to provide letters to organizations about addressing communication access issues.

Ms. Gutiérrez mentioned Mr. Roger Robb's continued to work with APD and the community on the placard project.

## **Administrative Services**

Ms. Deborah Romero said how glad she is to have two reliable people in her department.

She discussed the end of Fiscal Year 2024 budget. As previously discussed, revenue is an ongoing concern that she closely monitors. Without a change in the statute, an increase in the general funds will need to be requested.

Ms. Romero shared that the Commission is ready for the FY24 audit.

Commissioner Hooper commended Ms. Romero for her excellent work and handling of the Commission finances.

### **c. Report from Community Engagement Specialist, Trevor Brennan**

Mr. Brennan summarized his duties in managing social media, the web site, highlighting the equipment available, and expanding information availability and access for more constituents.

He discussed his involvement with the multi-national AI taskforce. This included Automative Speech Recognition (ASR) technology, which is not currently able to replace CART services.

Mr. Brennan discussed the over 100-man-hours time requirement and effort that was required to setup this hybrid meeting and successfully stream it. This effort and time investment involved multiple members



of the Commission. It required access to and testing of technology for cameras, audio, streaming, and software simultaneously; an FM Loop update was also needed for successful audio access.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**24.14**

Commissioner Herbold made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Mann seconded.

Ms. Bregar took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dawson – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Stone-Romero - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee F. Bregar

Renee Bregar  
Administrative Operations Specialist

# Executive Summary

*G. Nathan Gomme, Executive Director*

Commissioners and Community Members:

I am pleased to present to you all the fourth quarter report for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) for the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In this report, I will present the wrap up for FY24 and discuss the plans for the upcoming fiscal year, with some updates on ongoing work and plans for the Communication Facilitator (CF) Program in conjunction with the new contract for Support Service Provider (SSP) Program, as well as the wrap up of research for programs across the United States. I also will touch on some work with local organizations in the state, the Roundhouse, and upcoming performance measures and budget requests.

As I mentioned in the quarter three report, House Bill (HB) 89 was not able to make it through the legislative session. This was primarily due to the truncated timetable in the last session. However, this did not stop any discussions of it potentially being heard in the next legislative session, which I believe will be the case due to some discussions that occurred toward the end of the fiscal year. These discussions centered around continued support from the legislative members who signed on to the bill during this past session, as well as continued support for the language that was used in the most recent iteration of the bill. Some context on this is that the previous version of the bill, HB 288, was revised and produced what we know as HB 89. That bill can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?Chamber=H&LegType=B&LegNo=89&year=24>.

The previous version of the bill HB288 can be seen here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&legType=B&legNo=288&year=23>.

While this discussion will continue in the next session, I wanted to highlight again the fact that we were able to successfully add the Communication Facilitator funding

request to our final budget request for Fiscal Year 25, with the additional \$200,000 to be used for the Communication Facilitator (CF) pilot project adjacent to the SSP program. This was a huge success for funding, as soon as we were aware of the additional funding the work began to create language that could be added to the Scope of Work, through a process known as a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the SSP Program. The realistic location for the program will be with the vendor who secures the awarded contract due to the significant overlap in persons being served by said program.

In February 2024, the procurement process for the SSP program was started officially, through an RFP, the PreProposal meeting occurred on April 4, 2024, shortly after seeing the results of the budget requests. In order to proceed with the procurement, Mr. Sean Sinderholm, Ms. Deborah Romero and I worked together to develop a Scope of Work which listed a number of items that Ms. Corina Gutierrez and I learned from the previous meetings with the community throughout the previous quarters. These meetings provided some details on the needs of the community and also allowed us to know some complaints and concerns from the previous vendor of the Support Services Provider Program. Part of the reason we wanted to start so soon was to ensure we established a vendor for the SSP's as well as the CF program.

In the Scope of Work, we made it clear that this additional program would need to start on day one, from a planning perspective. By adding the information to the Scope of Work the current vendor, Vancro, would be able to include their potential services in the response to the proposal if they responded. Part of the expectation of this service is to provide the members of the community who will be directly served by the CF with the ability to have natural conversations over video communications. The goal is to provide communication facilitation without adding the notion that a Communication Facilitator will become another tier of "interpretation". My research on the program found three states funding the program; Washington State, Oregon, and Maryland. All three are funded to different levels with different funding sources. The majority of them are funded through some level of relay funding and general funding. None of them are provided through the relay vendor, however, and overseen by a state office. With New Mexico joining the discussion on Communication Facilitators, we will become the fourth state to

provide this service in the U.S. The overall approach with CFs is the same approach as I explained in the third quarter report, which is to provide video-based communication through whatever method is most effective for the end user making the call. During the request period, we saw only one vendor submit their paperwork. We had at the time intended to move forward with the RFP process to keep our timetable, but in late April, after discussion with the State Purchasing Agent/Buyer that was assigned to this RFP, we shifted to a Sole Source, with the understanding that this would have to be a multiple year contract. This change, however, meant the timetable had to be changed to allow for a 30-day posting for any possible challenge on the state purchasing website. While it was proposed by state purchasing that we do the procurement in this manner, our office still had to justify the request and present it for review. This pushed the timetable into late May or early June. During that time, we also still had to prepare for the implementation of the CF Pilot Program starting 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 11<sup>th</sup>, 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. We met with Vancro in late June to begin the plans for the upcoming fiscal year and the pilot program discussion revolved around who would spearhead the CF Pilot Program. The first official CF meeting will occur on July 1st with the new contract beginning and plans for the future.

Another topic of discussion is the growth of the SSP program under Vancro. 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, which is a 50.8% increase in 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 both a good thing and is also concerning. The funds for the program have been based on the usage in the previous years which have been routinely in the 3,500-to-3,900-hour range. It could be an outlier year for the program, but my concern is that this is the new reality of the program, with the influx at PAH! Hiland and the growing need for services. I have asked that the

funding for the upcoming Fiscal Year 26 be, at minimum, the combined amount of the request in FY25. With this growth and the fact that the CF program is in the pilot stage, it is clear to me that the funding request cannot go back to the FY24 budget levels. As I said, this is a mixed result, showing that we are expanding the use of the service and supporting the community at a better level. 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 request. We are fortunate that Vancro has been very transparent with this growth, and we are already able to include the request for the upcoming budget request early in the new fiscal year.

I continue to work with the CoLab group, which includes representatives from the New Mexico Department Of Justice, the Commission for the Blind, the Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT), to name a few, who are working to establish better access online and on site throughout the state. As I mentioned in the previous report, I was asked to participate in providing a statewide presentation to all of the state Chief Information Officers (CIOs) on the upcoming approval of the rule change to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which includes the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1, Level AA compliance), and it includes, for example, live captioning during live events. The rules which were approved in this fiscal year will have a short grace period before they will go into effect in April 2026, with a deadline for state and local agencies to comply by then. The rule also includes application programs developed for services. During the presentation, we discussed the plans for compliance or remediation to these guidelines. The presentation triggered a flurry of debate about funding requests and in-agency request of special appropriation from DoIT. We are attempting to make such a request, but the special appropriation tends to be tied more to cloud-based services, not tools related to remediation or even hardware upgrades for AI based tools to function effectively. The discussion on this topic did highlight an issue with agency websites; many agencies do not know if they adequately conform to the guidelines highlighted in the changes. This was apparent during the presentation which resulted in many requests for state level guidelines. This prompted a discussion within the CoLab for renewed discussion for the next fiscal year on a team or new agency focusing on the development of guidance for

the state on ensuring compliance with the ADA rules. I will continue to be a part of this discussion going into the next fiscal year.

Another topic that I will continue to be involved in is the work being done regarding accessibility at the Roundhouse. In May, I was informed that a longtime member, Raul Burciaga of the team at the Roundhouse, who has been working with Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) and myself, would be retiring. He worked with us through May to keep us informed of the status of an ADA Coordinator for the Roundhouse, a long-time goal in our discussions. The posting occurred in June. We also reviewed and worked on some improvements that were being planned prior to the upcoming session in Fiscal Year 25. Some of the discussions center around removing some of the equipment which is no longer working related to FM/Loop systems. We also discussed expanding loaner procedures at the Roundhouse for FM systems, which in the future may include some tablets for captioning. We also looked at setting up additional television monitors for captioning on the main floor areas for both the House and Senate Floors. We will need to work with the person who is hired, but I am thankful that Raul made this a priority prior to leaving.

The New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff all worked to attend and participate in several community events during the 4th quarter, in addition to the great outreach already taking place in the community by our team. Sean Sinderholm attended additional Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Albuquerque Chapter events in June, which I attended with him. He continues to introduce himself to the members of the community and let people know about the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP). With his procurement work completed, he has already started working on getting out there to the community. I attended the New Mexico Association of the Deaf (NMAD) Meeting at Pah, Vision Day at the University of New Mexico (UNM), and went to the Older Americans Access Act Presentation during the 4th quarter. I continue to participate in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) meeting, which became a critical discussion during the fires in southern New Mexico, which occurred in June, followed by the associated flooding. We were able to connect with resources in the area and help a few individuals who were Deaf and Hard

of Hearing connect with funding support during that difficult time. These meetings also included local members of the State Centers for Independent Living, as well as others in other locations. We discussed my continued concern with the lack of real-time interpreter/American Sign Language (ASL) information, for example, during evacuations. I also reiterated that there is communication access equipment purchased by the state for emergencies such as this, which need to be utilized in staging areas.

I attended a webinar in June along with Mr. Trevor Brennan related to the Older American Access Act presented by Deaf Seniors of America with the Arizona Commission. Some key points; the new rules took effect in March, and entities have until October of 2025 to comply. The changes include clarification on state and local area plans on aging as well as among tribal programs. The rules specify the broad range of persons who can receive services and clarify and prioritize people with the greatest social and economic needs. They also expand clarification on state and local agency policies and procedures and incorporate guidance for National Family Caregiver Support programs. Several definitions were also updated with modernized requirements. The New Mexico state plan that was in effect is set to end on September 30, 2025. We have already found some definition changes related to aging and long-term services on their website to comply with the rules however that is the extent of the changes we have seen so far.

In April, I talked with reps from AccesSOS about their upcoming launch and my goal was to make sure they connected with local organizations. They mentioned they had already met with NMSD, so we discussed the potential of meeting with other organizations. I met with representatives from Lango in April, as well. I was able to set up a meeting with AccesSOS and John Hooper, on behalf of HLAA, in May, to discuss the AccesSOS launch within the state of New Mexico and their concerns for funding. I continue to work with Dr. Meena Mann and Mr. Ryan Means from NMAD to establish a future meeting with AccesSOS; we were unable to meet in June.

Ms. Lisa Dignan and I also met in June with a group planning a Disability Employment Awareness Month event in October. This was thanks to the invitation from Casey Stone-

Romero and Greg Trapp. We will be involved in the event and are looking forward to it. Other meetings in the fourth quarter included Performance Measures discussions for the next fiscal year, and discussions about the FY24 audit. I also am looking forward to several disability awareness events in July which will be in Santa Fe.

I mentioned in the last report that we are looking at the use of captioned telephone services, the broadband expansion, and our role as an agency, to continue shifting our Equipment Distribution Program to a more modern and effective program. A white paper from the National Association of State Relay Administrators (NASRA), TDI, and several member states addressing the decline of Captioned Telephone Services (CTS), and the need for renewed support from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for the replacement of traditional relay services with Real Time Text (RTT) was released in the fourth quarter. We have seen the decline in the use of analog-based CTS, while there continues to be large usage of IP-based CTS and a desire for mobile device utilization for relay services, which RTT specifically addresses. We have also seen several members of our state contact us claiming the CapTel 840 no longer works; this is due to the lines transitioning from analog to digital. This means the analog-based technology does not work anymore and we need to expand our tools for captioned telephone communication. Mr. Sinderholm and I are already working on updating the catalog for the next fiscal year and are getting quotes and solutions to this barrier from Teltex. We will be distributing tools that leverage the tools from Android and Apple. This will enable our community to use captioning apps, from our vendor Hamilton Relay, RTT, and smartphones. There is also the question of adding wearable technology such as the Apple and Android watches we reviewed. We will be adding the notification technology, such as the watches, to our program. The transition from analog devices, such as the CapTel 840, by force has shifted our timeline significantly and we want to ensure our community has the equipment it needs to access AI-based tools, in addition to the available apps for captioning and other upcoming tools, such as the captioning glasses we were able to preview.

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

*G. Nathan Gomme*



# Community Advocacy

*Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy*

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

The Department of Community Advocacy continued to work with members of the Hearing Loss community, which includes individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Disabled, to address communication barriers that they encounter in their daily lives. These communication barriers prevent access to services on both a systemic and individual levels. This fourth quarter of FY24, we addressed communication barriers with health care providers and clinics, the Human Services Department (HSD), law enforcement, a television broadcasting company, shelters, corporations, restaurants, courts, apartment management, non-profit organizations and retail stores. During the quarter, the department also worked on various projects.

Ms. Gutiérrez 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 for on-site interpreters are made 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 participated in a panel for the UNM Sign Language Interpreting Program. The panel's purpose was to interpret various topics presented by first-year students. Two groups of practicum students performed ASL and transliteration interpreting. The audience included experienced interpreters and Deaf consumers who observed the practicum students' work. After the panel, the experienced interpreters and Deaf consumers provided feedback to the practicum students on their interpreting skills. Ms. Gutiérrez is dedicated to working with these practicum students and committed to helping them improve their interpreting skills, as they will interpret for our community in the future.

Ms. Gutiérrez 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.

Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Brennan were invited by the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) to attend the New Mexico Inclusive Post Secondary Education Conference. The two-day event featured both in-person and Zoom sessions on a variety of topics. Presenters included experts from the National Deaf Center, Utah State University, and Inclusive Higher Education from Colorado.

Ms. Gutiérrez remains actively engaged in the monthly/quarterly meetings of the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force. She, along with two other subcommittee members, met to review and revise the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force brochure. The original brochure was developed in 2023, the updated brochure will be presented to the committee at the next meeting.

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

- 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.

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

- 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 organization 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 organization'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). MVD arranged an on-site interpreter capable of providing tactile interpreting for the DeafBlind individual.
- Worked with the 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.
- Discussed with the healthcare provider the need for an on-site interpreter, rather than a Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) based on a Deaf patient's severe health condition. The provider agreed to provide on-site interpreters for all future appointments.

Ms. Sandoval and Mx. Dahlgren completed 40 hours of Core Advocacy Training hosted by the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NMCADV). The training began with 16.75 hours of self-paced online coursework, followed by 24 hours of Zoom-based sessions over three days. The NMCADV facilitator who led the training, expressed interest in partnering with Ms. Sandoval and Mx. Dahlgren to provide workshops focused on the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community. The goal is to present to NMCADV and various shelters to educate them on effectively working with our community and ensuring proper communication access.

## **Community Education**

A total of 59 presentations were provided by Community Education Specialist, Mr. Robb, and other staff members. The fourth quarter is normally a good quarter for presentations/trainings.

Ms. Gutiérrez provided 3 trainings for the UNM Signed Language Interpreter Program's Consecutive Interpreting class, focusing on "Veterinarian setting", "Principal's Office setting", and "Doctor's appointment setting".

Mr. Dennis Stidham conducted 19 Introduction to ASL presentations to UNM Students.

Ms. Eubank led a presentation and discussion on "How to Interpret Sensitive Subjects" where apprentice interpreters can ask for vocabulary and cultural information that would normally be considered "taboo" to discuss with consumers. This meeting is an excellent way to provide our apprentices with the support they need to interpret complex and sensitive topics.

Ms. Susana Santillan provided two presentations:

- NMCDHH Overview, 4/24/24, to the New Mexico Workforce Connection Southwest New Mexico Partners Zoom Meeting to 23 participants.
- NMCDHH Overview, 6/25/24, to the United Healthcare Medicare Brokers Microsoft Teams Meeting to 35 participants.

Mr. Robb provided 27 presentations/trainings during the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2024. This is the breakdown of the presentations/trainings Mr. Robb provided:

- Introduction to ASL – 19
- Hearing Loss Sensitivity – Medical – 3
- Hearing Loss Sensitivity – Driving Schools – 2
- Accessibility – 1
- Fingerspelling – 1
- Hearing Loss Sensitivity - 1

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

- Lovelace Medical Group
- Monarch/SOL
- Presbyterian Healthcare Services
- Signed Language Interpreting Program – UNM
- UNM Transportation Safety Center
- UNM Hospital

Mr. Gomme presented two times in the fourth quarter, One of the presentations was on Digital Accessibility addressing the new rules with WCAG 2.1 and how it will impact state agencies moving forward prior to 2026. The other presentation was with the Capitol on different steps that need to be taken on improving accessibility prior to the next session which includes captioning and contact points for listening system.

Mr. Sena provided 5 presentations more information can be found in the New Mexico Relay Section.

### **Systemic Advocacy**

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

- Patient & Family Advisory Council (UNM Hospital) – We continued to participate in their monthly meetings, both in person and via Zoom. Various departments are invited to present their services and seek feedback on how to enhance inclusivity and improve service delivery.
- UNM Hospital – They contacted Mr. Robb to do presentations to the traveling nurses' group, as they felt this group needs training on hearing loss. Additionally, they identified a need for training in the Emergency Department. We have since revised the Hearing Loss Sensitivity training, specifically for this department. The plan is to begin these presentations in Fiscal Year 2025.
- Christus St. Vincent Hospital (CSV) – Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Robb contacted CSV about organizing a town hall event, given the significant number of individuals with hearing loss who visit the hospital. The hospital was receptive to

the idea, and we plan to meet in Fiscal Year 2025 to finalize the details and get the event underway.

- ADA Advisory Council - Mr. Robb continues to attend the council meetings monthly, either via Zoom or in person. With additional members joining, we were able to meet quorum. Mr. Robb moved that the City of Albuquerque consider hiring a full-time ASL interpreter to provide services for the city-sanctioned events and manage interpreter requests directly. He also suggested that ADAAC explore methods for conducting a required census to better quantify the number of people with hearing loss within the city. This initiative aims to encourage other cities to adopt similar practices or to prompt the state to implement broader measures.

### **Special Projects**

#### **Jennifer Dahlgren's Introductory Vlog - Completed**

Mr. Robb and Ms. Sandoval worked with Mx. Dahlgren to produce an introduction vlog for Mx. Dahlgren, our newest Las Cruces Community Advocacy Specialist, which was shared with the community.

#### **Mid-Year Report Vlog project – In Progress**

Mr. Robb and Ms. Sandoval worked on the Mid-Year Report vlog. Despite facing several challenges, they successfully completed the video editing by the end of the fiscal year. The video is now in post-production and will be released early in FY25.

#### **APD Placard Video project - In Progress**

APD sent their videos, and it was determined that captions are needed for the community video before the Placard project can be implemented and applications made available to the community.

# Las Cruces Satellite Office

## **Individual Advocacy and Service Coordination**

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

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

- Ms. Santillan 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.
- Ms. Santillan was invited to participate in the following new committees to represent the NMCDHH.
  - Doña Ana Community United Time Bank Steering Committee
  - Emergency Management Community Awareness Subcommittee-Chairperson
- Ms. Santillan continues to serve on the following committees by educating them about hearing loss resources.
  - Behavioral Health Local Collaborative 3
  - Behavioral Health Local Collaborative Policy & Advocacy State Committee
  - City of Las Cruces American with Disabilities Act Advisory Council- Secretary
  - New Mexico Workforce Connection Disabilities Committee
  - New Mexico Workforce Monitoring / Performance Committee
- Ms. Santillan continues to collaborate with local employers by sharing job opportunities with her consumers.

## **Booths**

During the fourth quarter, Ms. Santillan attended fourteen (14) booths.

<b>Q4 Events</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participants</b>
The 1st Annual Statewide Heroes Hiring Heroes Employment	Las Cruces	4/1/2024	21
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church Food Pantry	Chaparral	4/2/2024	20



Doña Ana Community College Spring Career Fair	Las Cruces	4/3/2024	40
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church Food Pantry	Tortugas	4/8/2024	23
Hatch Food Pantry	Hatch	4/10/2024	14
Lighthouse Food Pantry	Las Cruces	4/16/2024	38
Peace Lutheran Church Food Pantry	Las Cruces	4/18/2024	40
Veterans of Foreign Wars Food Pantry	Anthony	4/22/2024	38
VA Clinic Resource Booth	Las Cruces	4/26/2024	18
Solstice, Senior Living Agency Resource Booth	Las Cruces	5/1/2024	13
Salvation Army Food Pantry	Las Cruces	5/2/2024	15
Calvary Baptist Church Food Pantry	Las Cruces	5/8/2024	18
Radium Springs Community Center Mobile Food Pantry	Radium Springs	5/9/2024	34
The Deming Senior Center Information Fair	Demining	5/21/2024	21
		<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>

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

- Worked with the Roswell Social Security Office to ensure they had a contract with an interpreting agency. They are now ready to provide interpreters for appointments.
- Ensured a Deaf Plus client had an interpreter for a treatment team meeting.
- Worked with a Deaf Plus client to self-advocate in his treatment team meeting and speak up for his goals and desires. This resulted in a positive outcome of interpreters for medical care as well as opportunities for employment.

- Advocated for a Deaf Plus individual, at a New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) contractor, for a qualified, licensed interpreter.
- Educated multiple contractors regarding individual access rights. Mx. Dahlgren continues to work with the contractors in regard to providing interpreters for meetings with the individual.
- Successfully navigated a discharge plan from a hospital for an individual who is Deaf. Interpreters were requested for all follow-up appointments.
- Continued advocacy for an individual who is Deaf with the Domestic Violence Shelter as well as New Mexico Immigration Law Center and Catholic Charities.
- Ongoing advocacy within the court system for an individual who is Deaf.
- Assisted a Deaf individual with filing complaints against a local lawyer with the NM Department of Justice (NMDOJ) and NM State Bar.
- Guided a Deaf individual in self-advocacy for interpreters.
- Assisted a Deaf individual in requesting an interpreter for an appointment with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).
- Worked with a specialty medical clinic to ensure they had a contract for interpreter services for in-person appointments for Deaf patients.
- Successfully coordinated an interpreted meeting between a Deaf individual and advocates from the District Attorney's office and the Domestic Violence Shelter.
- Attended workshops and trainings through the following organizations:
  - Several trainings through the State of NM – ELM training system
  - National Deaf Center
  - National Association of the Deaf
  - Southwest ADA Center
  - Dona Ana County

### **Community Collaboration**

Mx. Dahlgren and Ms. Santillan worked alongside the following organizations and agencies in this fourth quarter, providing information, guidance and fact sheets:

- Adult/Substance Abuse/Medicaid Sub-Committee
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court
- Amber Care Healthcare
- Blue Cross Blue Shield NM
- Catholic Charities
- Center for Health Innovation

- City of Las Cruces Economic Development Department
- City of Las Cruces Transit
- Columbus Coalition
- Comfort Keepers
- Community Action Agency
- Community Options
- Cyra Com International, Inc.
- Deming Luna County Senior Citizens Center
- Diersen Charities Community Relations
- District Attorney's Office
- Domestic Violence Shelter
- Doña Ana Community College
- Doña Ana Community United Time Bank
- Dona Ana County Community Resilience Leaders
- El Paso Community College – Interpreter Preparation Program Advisory Board
- Hear On Earth
- Heart of New Mexico
- Las Cruces ADA Committee
- Las Cruces City Council
- Las Cruces engineering firm
- Las Cruces Fire Department
- Las Cruces Police Department
- Las Cruces Salvation Army
- Las Cruces VA Clinic
- Links of Life
- Magistrate Court
- Memorial Ear, Nose, & Throat Institute
- Mesilla Valley Community of Hope
- Mountain View Physical Therapy Clinic
- Morgan Stanley Retirement
- NM Coalition to End Homelessness
- NM Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- NM Department of Workforce Solutions State Veterans
- NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- NM Human Services Department

- NM Immigration Law Center
- NM State KRWG Public Media
- NM State University
- NM Workforce Connection Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
- NM Workforce Connection One-Stop Coordinator SW NM
- NM Workforce Connection Southwestern Area Workforce Development Board Monitoring/Performance
- Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging
- State of New Mexico Alternate Dispute Resolution Department
- State of Texas Adult Protective Services
- Social Security
- Solstice Senior Living
- United Healthcare Medicare Plans
- Vancro
- WESST Las Cruces

# Support Service Provider Program

## *As Reported by Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services*

For the entire fiscal year, Vancro provided 7,219.50 Direct SSP hours and 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 56 active clients transferred to Vancro. Vancro almost doubled that number, ending the year with 89 in total.

Vancro is excited to continue our work for the New Mexican Deaf Senior Citizens, DeafBlind and Deaf Disabled community and remain committed to expanding services state-wide. Below are the key metrics Vancro is tracking for this contract. These are the baseline metrics that allow us to compare data quarterly.

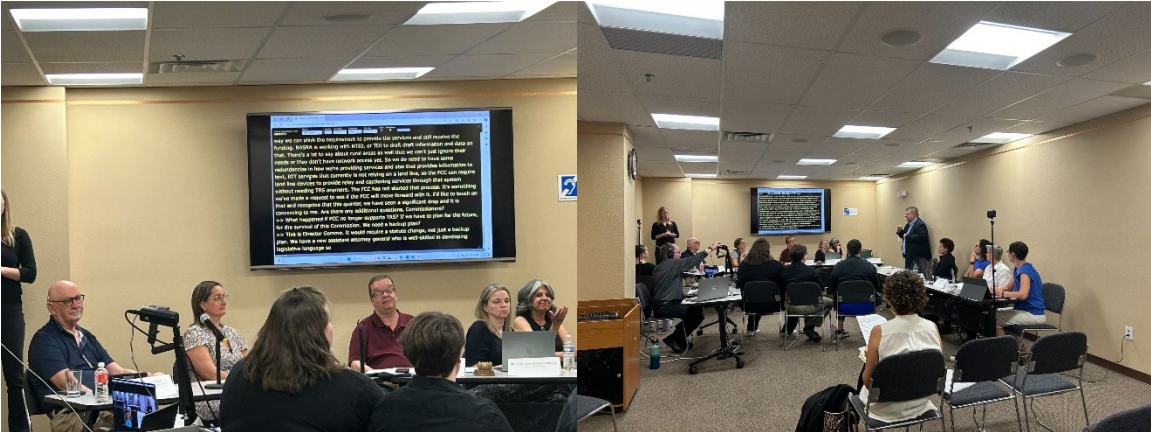
Number of Support Service Providers: 27 (4 in pending status)  
Number of Program Participants: 89 (+7 with 2 in pending status)  
Number of complaints addressed: 3  
Number of SSP hours for the quarter: 2361.50  
Number of SSP requests for the quarter: 668  
Number SSP trainings offered: 0  
Number of 1:1 SSP trainings: 1

### **Community Events and Engagement and Training:**

April 2 - Presentation to UNM Practicum students on interpreting and SSP work available to them  
April 10 - Meeting with City of ABQ ADA Coordinator and NMCDHH  
April 11 - UNM Panel Presentation attendance to watch panel on DeafBlind interpreting. Also met with students ahead of time for informational interview that contributed to their panel research.  
April 11 – Helen Keller National Center new regional rep meeting  
April 11 - American Legion  
April 16 - UNM Panel Presentation attendance  
April 18 - Presentation to UNM Seminar students on effective guiding and visual description techniques when working with DeafBlind consumers  
April 24 - Disabled America Veterans (DAV) dinner with veterans  
April 25 - Lango event

May 3 - Las Cruces Meet and Greet  
May 4 - Community Picnic  
May 8<sup>th</sup> - Tamara Sanchez- Outreach to Human Services Division  
May 31 - Avoiding Scams workshop with T-mobile – Senior Citizens  
April 1 - Avoiding Scams workshop with T-mobile – DeafBlind  
June 4 - 1:1 SSP Training with Anthony B  
June 6 - Humana meeting  
June 7 - Colorado CDHH outreach  
June 26 - DAV dinner with veterans

# NMCDHH Activities During Q4 FY24



NMCDHH conducted its first Hybrid Board Meeting in June. More information can be found in the Community Engagement Section of the report.



Mr. Roger Robb did 27 presentations this 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, including a virtual presentation to Presbyterian Healthcare Services. Staff Interpreter Jessica Eubank, interpreted many of these presentations.



Mr. Stidham and Ms. Santillan attended 21 booths during the fourth quarter.







Mr. Stidham and Ms. Santillan attended 21 booths during the fourth quarter.



# Outreach & Telecommunications

## **Telecommunications Equipment Distribution (TED) Program**

The Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) lends telecommunication devices at no cost to qualifying New Mexico residents who need assistance in communicating via telephone. Equipment includes amplified telephones, iPads, smartphones, speech assistive devices, notification systems, amplified ringers, and assistive listening devices with and without neckloops.

### **Equipment:**

Mr. Sinderholm continues to oversee the TED Program and continues to communicate with various applicants throughout the State of New Mexico. There are continued reviews on the next pieces of equipment to be added to the program with Mr. Gomme. Mr. Sinderholm attended the HLAA Albuquerque Chapter meeting in June with Mr. Gomme, listening to the hearing loss community regarding their concerns about hospital experiences related to educating staff in these facilities on barriers related to persons who identify as being hard of hearing.

Mr. Sinderholm reorganized and cleaned out the TED Testing Room, for the purpose of testing out 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 them to use all of the equipment effectively and decide which device best suits their hearing loss. The TED Testing Room officially opened its doors in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter and has already been used for several consultations, and is expected to have more testers come in during the upcoming Fiscal Year. Additionally, during Q4 Mr. Sinderholm:

- Communicated with and assisted a person to educate them about TEDP and its offering. This person required several consultations to find the appropriate equipment.
- Provided resources for a person who is not eligible for TEDP, and referred them to specific programs they are eligible for and can receive equipment from.

- Assisted several applicants who experienced technical difficulties with their captioning phones, referring them to our relay vendor to provide the internet protocol-based captioning phones as needed. The barriers that we are seeing are due to increased transitions from analog lines to digital lines by the carrier. Mr. Sinderholm met with Mr. Gomme to work with our relay vendor on getting a notice out to the community on the transition
- NMCDHH discussed creating an online portal for application and processing. Due to rules within the state the vendor would need to provide specific details on their security and backend services before we are able to proceed with this idea. The vendor was asked for the details in order to request additional funding for the development of this online portal..

Mr. Sinderholm under the guidance of Mr. Gomme and Mrs. Romero, recently completed his first full procurement for NMCDHH. The Support Service Provider Program contract was awarded, after working with the assigned buyer from the State Purchasing Division to Vancro for the term of the contract, which is for four fiscal years. In order to take on the role of a procurement officer Mr. Sinderholm had to complete all of the required procurement training and work with Chief Procurement Officer Ms. Romero and Mr. Gomme on what to expect throughout the process. Mr. Sinderholm is already preparing for an upcoming extension of optional years in Relay Services service and expects to start jumping into it in FY25.

In the fourth quarter, TEDP distributed a total of 101 pieces of equipment. The distributed is outlined in two tables below. For the year, we distributed a total of 1,349 pieces of equipment, exceeding our legislative measure.

Phone	Total items distributed
Clarity Alto	0
Clarity Alto Plus	0
Clarity D714	0
Clarity JV35	0
Clarity XLC2+	0
Clarity XLC8	0

Clarity XLC8 with GLT	26
ClearSounds A1600BT	0
ClearSounds CSC600ER	0
Panasonic KX-TGM430B	0
Panasonic KX-TGM450S	0
Geemarc Ampli550	0
Geemarc AmpliPower60+	9
CapTel 840	0
<b>iPad</b>	
Deaf Package	8
Hard of Hearing Package	16
Deaf-Blind Package	8
Speech Package	16
<b>iPad mini</b>	
Deaf Package	0
Hard of Hearing Package	0
Deaf-Blind Package	0
Speech Package	0
<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>83</b>

<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Total items distributed</b>
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Amplicom NL100 Neckloop	0
Bellman Mino with neckloop	0
Bellman High Powered Neckloop (no device)	0
BeHear SMARTO	0
Clarity SR100 Super Phone Ringer	0
Clarity HA40 In-line Telephone Amplifier	0
ClearSounds ANS3000 Answering Machine	0
ClearSounds CS-CR200 Phone Ringer	0
ClearSounds CS-WIL95 Amplifier	0
Geemarc LH10PK Neckloop	0
Geemarc V2T-10	0
GLT with V2T-10	16
GLT	0
Provox® SolaTone® Plus	0
Provox® TruTone® EMOTE®	0
Provox® TruTone® Plus	0
ROMET® R700 Electronic Larynx	0
Krown RA 05 Amplified Ringer with Strobe	0
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA360QK	0
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA380	0
Serene Innovations RF-200 Alerting System	0
Serene Innovations SA-40 Cell Phone Amplifier	0
Serene Innovations UA-45 Universal Phone Amplifier	0
Silent Call Medallion Kit	0
SonicAlert HA360MKBR-II	0
Surge Protector (Phones and accessories)	2

<b>Total Accessories Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	18
<b>Total Overall Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	101

### **Outreach**

During the fourth quarter of FY24, Mr. Stidham and Mr. Sena from Relay New Mexico hosted two booths at Sandia Wellness and The Moving Forward Conference – ARC in Albuquerque. Mr. Stidham also provided four booths in Albuquerque. The total number of individuals who visited our booth was 811.

<b>Q4</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Visitors</b>
UNMH Health Professions Symposium	Albuquerque	4/13/2024	187
Sandia Wellness	Albuquerque	4/17/2024	142
ASL Fun Night	Albuquerque	4/19/2024	36
City of Albuquerque Employee Fair	Albuquerque	5/9/2024	186
NMBHPA (New Mexico Behavioral Health Partner Association)	Albuquerque	5/16 -17/2024	130
The Moving Forward Conference (Arc)	Albuquerque	6/21-22/2024	130
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>811</b>

**Relay New Mexico (RNM)**

During the fourth quarter of FY24 Mr. Tom Sena from Hamilton Relay representing Relay New Mexico provided several booths throughout the state which are listed below. In addition to the booths Mr. Sena had several field visits and presentations. Mr. Sena had 4 field visits in Albuquerque, Raton, Las Cruces, and Socorro. Topics included CapTel services, the Equipment Distribution Program, using captions on smartphones, and Traditional Relay Services.

<b>Q4</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Visitors</b>
New Mexico APCO/NENA Conference	Santa Fe	4/3/2024	150
Raton Family Health Fair	Raton	4/18/2024	250
Las Vegas Senior Center	Las Vegas	4/19/2024	40
San Juan Center for Independence Youth Transition Fair	San Juan	4/25/2024	200
Sierra Joint Office on Aging	Truth or Consequences	5/13/2024	25
Los Volcanes Senior Center	Albuquerque	5/29/2024	75
Psychosocial Rehabilitation Association of New Mexico Conference	Albuquerque	6/12-14/2024	300
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,040</b>

Mr. Sena also provided 5 presentations throughout the fourth quarter, they occurred primarily in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Topics included CapTel Services both via landline and on Smartphones.



# Community Engagement

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

## **Director of Community Engagement Highlights**

Ms. Dignan was involved in a variety of tasks and projects in the fourth quarter of FY24.

- The Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB) hired a new Board Administrator, Emma Quintana. Ms. Dignan worked closely with her as she is learning about signed language interpreter qualifications and licensure requirements. She is doing a fantastic job.
- While it still needs a few minor adjustments, the NM-PLUS online system for licensure applications and renewals continues to work well. The Fact Sheet regarding applying for licenses was helpful in guiding applicants through the process.
- The SLIPB met on April 4, 2024. During that meeting the Board asked that Ms. Dignan share an announcement with the community regarding reinstatements and the extensions that were approved during the COVID-19 pandemic, which she did. They also streamlined the process for approval of requests for reinstatements and extensions. These two actions resulted in several New Mexico interpreters coming back to the field.
- The next SLIPB meeting was scheduled for August but will need to be postponed until additional members are appointed by the Governor, as they don't currently have a quorum.
- In the fourth quarter, Ms. Dignan continued to promptly respond to a broad range of questions about licensure from interpreters, hiring entities, staffing agencies, and the SLIPB staff. Most frequently asked questions were about qualifications for different license types and the application process, so Ms. Dignan continued to update our Fact Sheets on these topics.
- Recruiting for the Fall 2024 session of New Mexico Mentoring began. The session will start in August and application requests are very promising.
- All quotes, memos, and agreements for FY25 with interpreters, referral agencies, and our CART provider were completed.
- Lotus Office Management implemented most of the improvements we requested in preparation for re-negotiating our lease for the Albuquerque office.
- Ms. Dignan continued to serve on the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities and attend their meetings monthly via Zoom or in person.

- Webinars provided by the EEOC, the Southwest ADA Center, the State Personnel Office, and others have benefited Ms. Dignan’s work.
- Ms. Dignan provided guidance to several entities on issues related to communication access including:
  - United States District Court, District of New Mexico
  - Private festivals and events
  - The Arizona Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - The Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board Administrator and staff
  - Interpreter referral agencies and staffing agencies
  - Several other individuals and private businesses

**Community Engagement Activities**

- Our social media contacts grow each quarter. Currently we have 2480 connections across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which is an increase of 15 over the last quarter, and we have 111 subscribers to our YouTube channel. We have 346 subscribers to the bi-weekly email newsletter, an increase of 12 from last quarter. Information shared includes meetings and events, open captioned movies in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces, webinars, job postings, and other information of interest to our constituents.
- Sharing booth events in advance continued. The events are listed on the NMCDHH website calendar ([www.cdhh.nm.gov/events](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov/events)) and shared on social media and in the bi-weekly email newsletter. We appreciate all staff who go to booths for their assistance compiling the details for upcoming booths and providing photos to share on social media and in agency reports.
- We continue to respond to questions submitted via the “Ask the Expert” form on the website or directly to the [NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov](mailto:NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov) email address which is monitored by Mr. Brennan and Ms. Dignan. Contacts in the fourth quarter included questions about hearing aids, ASL class information, legal interpreting, and a number of requests for advocacy and TEDP information. In most cases, requests were responded to by a staff member within one business day.
- Mr. Brennan worked closely with the new Administrative Operations Specialist, Renee Bregar, during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to train her on the responsibilities of the front desk and how to assist the members of our community who contact us for assistance or guidance. Ms. Bregar has been an invaluable addition to the Commission staff and continues a tradition of exemplary Front Desk customer service. By the end of April, Ms. Bregar was able to take over the responsibility of answering the Front Desk phone, and all other responsibilities of the Administrative

Operations Specialist position. During the fourth Quarter, Ms. Bregar completed several training sessions required by the state and multiple sessions related to customer service and effective communication. She addressed 143 communication barriers by telephone, email or in person. The most common request was for information about the TEDP program. Other questions in order of frequency were financial assistance for hearing aids, how to find an interpreter and who pays for interpreting services.

- Mr. Brennan continues to monitor the Ask the Expert email address along with Ms. Dignan, and answers many of the emails himself. During the fourth quarter he addressed 125 communication barriers via phone or email. The most common request was for advocacy assistance. The remaining questions in order of frequency were requests for information about the TEDP program, how to find an interpreter, financial assistance for hearing aids, and who pays for interpreting services.
- More NMCDHH Fact Sheets were updated and uploaded to the website. This is an ongoing project with collaboration between several staff members.
- Ms. Dignan shared information with the interpreting community via her email distribution list, which continues to grow. Entities around New Mexico regularly request that information be shared. Messages regarding professional development opportunities, job postings, certification testing changes, licensure board and professional organization meetings, and other information relevant to interpreters were shared with an average of one email per week to well over 200 subscribers.
- Except for the website and our email accounts, all the platforms on which we engage the community are used at no cost to the agency.

### **Community Engagement Specialist Highlights**

- Trevor Brennan continued to transition into his new role as the Community Engagement Specialist while still performing some duties related to his previous Administrative Operations Specialist position until April. Mr. Brennan now handles the functions of our social media, website, and biweekly newsletter, with continued support and guidance from Ms. Dignan. In FY25, Mr. Brennan and Ms. Dignan will be exploring several projects to enhance the Commission's online knowledge database and social media outreach.
- With the unexpected retirement of Ms. Rodriguez, Mr. Brennan continued to support the Administrative Services Department as needed. Ms. Vaiera Rice has done an exemplary job of assuming multiple roles in the ASD department until the Financial

Services Specialist position can be filled. The addition of Ms. Bregar to the ASD team has also had a positive impact on all areas of the department.

- Mr. Brennan continued to work with ASD staff and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) on several projects including preparing equipment for new staff starting in the fourth quarter and addressing numerous technical difficulties with a variety of office equipment. During the fourth quarter, the Governor issued an Executive Order mandating all agencies to examine their IT info/infrastructure and address any security vulnerabilities. This has required greater monitoring. With no formal IT department, this mandate increases the already large and unexpected demand of IT responsibilities on Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme. It has increased communication with DoIT staff to appropriately set up protections for the agency. However, there continue to be communication access barriers that are being addressed. In FY25 Mr. Brennan will be working with Mr. Gomme on securing funding first to ensure we have modernized hardware to handle upcoming changes both for WCAG compliance changes as outlined in the Executive Directors report, and also to address the potential inclusion of AI based technology.
- Mr. Brennan's work on a hybrid board meeting in June that was mentioned in the third quarter continued for much of the 4th quarter. The main objective for this hybrid meeting was to make it accessible for both 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. There were a few seconds of internet reliability issues, but overall, 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 are able to expand their capabilities and ability to serve the citizens 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 at the time of the meeting. At the time of the publication of this report the recording of the meeting had been viewed by over 30 members of the public.
- 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. This symposium laid the foundation for future work to ensure that Deaf perspectives on the use of automated or automatic interpreting via AI are thoroughly integrated into policy recommendations for government and private sector organizations. This involvement of AI with interpreting intersects with the influence that AI is having on cybersecurity considerations and the Governor's Executive Order as mentioned previously. Mr. Brennan is now a member of the Advisory Group. Initial policy reports and recommendations are being drafted, with more information to be shared in FY25. More information about the symposium and the ongoing work of the Advisory Group can be found at: <https://deaf-futures.com/>.

- Mr. Brennan continues to serve on the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board and is able to answer questions related to Licensure when Ms. Dignan is unavailable. With the conclusion of the term of the previous Board Chair, Mr. Brennan was deeply honored to be elected Chair of the Board by his peers.
- Mr. Brennan attended three trainings/webinars during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in addition to the AI Symposium:
  - Legislative Performance Measure training hosted by New Mexico DFA in June.
  - A webinar about the Older Americans Act hosted by Deaf Seniors of America and the Arizona Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
  - Attended the final in a series of several webinars hosted by HLAA related to technology in the workplace and Over the Counter (OTC) hearing aids that he had been attending since the third quarter.
- Mr. Brennan attended the New Mexico Inclusive Post Secondary Education Conference hosted by NMSD with Ms. Gutierrez. More information about this conference can be found in the Community Advocacy section of this report.
- Mr. Brennan attended UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program's Vision Day in support of our new interpreting program applicants.
- Mr. Brennan worked with a staff member from Spaceport America in regard to their responsibility for providing an interpreter. This request was complicated by the remote location of the Spaceport, the lack of availability of local interpreters, and the short notice of the request.
- Due to his prior collaborations with the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP), Mr. Brennan was able to assist a community member with obtaining a temporary loan of accessibility equipment, to fully engage in civic duty. Mr. Brennan was also able to answer several questions from NMTAP staff related to accessibility apps and learning ASL.

### **Communication Development Specialist Highlights**

Ms. Eubank wrapped up the final quarter of FY24 by continuing to address multiple areas of the dynamic interpreting field in New Mexico. Her work includes the following:

- Ms. Eubank 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.
- Ms. Eubank assisted the New Mexico Registry for the Deaf (NMRID) in preparing for and executing the annual NMRID business meeting and community social. She worked with the members of the NMRID board on how to structure the business items on an agenda and assisted the board in facilitating the meeting.
- Ms. Eubank coordinated with the UNM Language Learning Center on creating a testing location for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Written 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. We are grateful to the UNM staff who partnered with us to provide a space capable of running multiple tests concurrently.
- Ms. Eubank proctored a session of the EIPA Written Test for a group of 8 local interpreters. Passing this test is a step toward qualifying for an Educational Interpreter License in New Mexico.
- The fourth quarter saw the first hybrid Board Meeting for NMCDHH. Because of the unique communication access requirements to ensure that the meeting was accessible both virtually and in person, Ms. Eubank dedicated a great amount of time in coordinating interpreting services, 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 for the quarter.
- NMCDHH provided a total of 161 hours of interpreting services in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Of these hours, 16.5 were dedicated to preparing for the hybrid board meeting.
- Referral agencies were not used this quarter.
- There were two unfilled interpreting requests this quarter.

### **The Apprentice Interpreter Program**

The fourth quarter saw a significant amount of activity in the Apprentice Interpreter Program as we worked toward wrapping up work with one cohort and beginning work with the next. Program highlights for this quarter are as follows:

- Both apprentices successfully completed the program and will continue to contract with us in FY25. We are looking forward to seeing their continued skill development and growth.
- The Apprentice Interpreter Program received multiple applications for FY25 with an increase of 300% more than the previous fiscal year. We believe this increase in applications is due, in part, to Ms. Eubank's positive interactions with students at the UNM panels this year.
- We selected 4 apprentices to work with us in FY25. Three are based in the Albuquerque area, and one is based in southern New Mexico.
- Apprentices engaged in 20.5 hours of observation, interpreting, and professional development work in the fourth quarter.

### **Human Resources**

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

- The Albuquerque office building experienced several unfortunate events including a sprinkler malfunction in the parking structure causing a flood that resulted in the elevators being shut down, and the failure of the building chiller resulting in dangerous heat levels inside the building. The Lotus Office Management staff worked hard to get everything resolved as quickly as possible, and the agency management team took action to assure staff were safe. This included having everyone work remotely as needed.
- Completed the onboarding of Renee Bregar, the new Administrative Operations Specialist.
- The Financial Services Specialist, Dinise Rodriguez, retired. Ms. Dignan completed the necessary documentation and processes to complete her retirement and termination from the state.
- The vacant Financial Services Specialist position was posted and interviews were conducted. Vairea Rice was promoted into the position.
- The then vacant Business Operations Specialist position was posted. A first round of interviews was conducted in June with a second round set for July. We hope the new staff member will start in August.

- Ms. Dignan completed all the preparation for the 3% FY25 Legislative Pay Increases to be entered with an effective date of July 6, 2024. Staff were notified about the increases and what to expect.
- Insurance premiums will increase in July. Some staff will also have an increased contribution percentage due to the pay increases. All staff who will be impacted were notified.
- Manager and Staff evaluations for all staff members were completed and entered in the state system prior to the June 30 deadline.
- Communicated with staff about Employee Handbook updates and policy changes.
- The weekly “Employee Handbook Minute” emails to agency staff continue to provide reminders about HR Policies and Procedures to share updates. These are helpful for new staff members and an effective reminder for everyone.
- The extremely beneficial HR Council Meetings have been switched back to in-person only, with no remote options. Ms. Dignan cannot reasonably commit a half day to travel back and forth to Santa Fe for a meeting that lasts less than an hour, so she has had to rely on information being sent out after the meetings, which rarely happens.
- Ms. Dignan continues to attend State Personnel Board Meetings when a remote option is offered. She attends webinars offered by SPO, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Department of Finance Administration (DFA) Payroll Bureau, and the Employee Benefit Bureau (EBB).

### **NMCDHH Library**

- Library patrons may not enter the library to browse the collection, but individuals who contact us requesting to borrow materials may pick them up by appointment.
- The online library can be accessed at <https://NMCDHH.librarika.com>, where people can view all of our library materials, reserve items, and review their loan history.
- Currently 116 people have registered for access to the database.

<b>Library Usage - FY 2024</b>					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Patrons	1	2	0	1	4
Items Loaned	2	3	0	1	6



# Administration & Finance

*Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services*

FY24 – Fourth Quarter Board Report						
Category		2024 Budget	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining Budget	% Expended
200	PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,613,400.00	1,173,956.09		439,443.91	72.76%
300	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	1,229,300.00	870,758.08	199,028.17	159,513.75	70.83%
400	OTHER	282,100.00	224,557.68	6,384.62	51,157.70	79.60%
500	OTHER FINANCING USES	116,500.00		116,500.00	0.00	0.00%
Total		3,241,300.00	2,269,271.85	321,912.79	650,115.36	70.01%

FY24 Collected Revenue June 30, 2024		
Month	General Fund Allotment	TRS Revenue
Subtotal	\$1,626,200.00	\$993,304.07

## Data & Statistics

*As required by Legislative Performance Measures*

### **Fiscal Year 2024**

<b>Legislative Performance Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>	<b>YTD % of Goal Met</b>
Number of workshops & training sessions conducted	135	133	99%
Number of outreach events coordinated	122	111	91%
Average number of relay minutes per month	10,000	4,268.58	43%
Number of accessible technology distributions	1,070	1,349	126%
Number of communication barriers addressed	20,000	21,482	107%
Number of interpreters in CDHH sponsored professional development	200	120	60%

### **Fiscal Year 2023**

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

## Community Members by Region



	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Year to Date
Region 1	31	11	5	6	53
Region 2	19	9	13	4	45
Region 3	89	32	80	47	248
Region 4	13	3	9	5	307
Region 5	50	24	52	33	159
<b>Total Members by Quarter</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>535</b>

## Individuals by Self-Identified Disability

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Year to Date
Deaf	85	20	51	17	173
Hard of Hearing	56	31	41	28	156
DeafBlind	7	3	7	4	21
Speech Disabled	1	0	9	2	12
Hearing	53	25	51	44	173
<b>Total Individuals by Quarter</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>535</b>



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

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

**Date:** July 31, 2024

**Re:** MOU Goals and Performance Report for Fourth Quarter SFY2024 (**April 1-  
June 30, 2024**)

**NMDVR Liaisons**

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

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

**NMDVR Service Provision:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Closed Successfully Rehabilitated (employed):**

No individual who is Deaf-Blind has been closed and successfully rehabilitated. Sixteen individuals who are Deaf have been successfully rehabilitated. Thirty-three individuals who are Hard of Hearing have successfully rehabilitated. Four individuals who have other hearing impediments have been closed and successfully rehabilitated.

**Employment Information**

The average number of hours worked for the one hundred forty-seven employed individuals who are Deaf/Deaf-Blind/Hard of Hearing or have Other Hearing Impediments is 31.55 hours per week. The average wage is \$18.98 per hour.

**Caseload Activity**

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

Of the four hundred fifty-two individuals who are Hard of Hearing or have Other Hearing Impediments on a DVR caseload, ninety-three have been opened or opened and closed.

**Ineligible for VR Services**

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

**Transition Services**

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted:

*Casey Stone-Romero*

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Casey Stone-Romero-Director  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



## Collaborating Agency Quarterly Report

Agency Name: Signed Language Interpreting Practice Board, RLD

Report By: Emma Quintana, Board Administrator

Expiration Date: June 30, 2024

Quarter Reported:

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

### Memorandum of Understanding:

New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing will:

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

Regulation and Licensing Department will:

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

- d. Number of license denials, suspensions, and revocations
- C. Provide budget reports for the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Fund upon request with appropriate advance notice.

**Performance Report**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Licenses Issued	15	8 Community, 0 Educational, 7 Provisional 3 Reinstatements
Complaints	4	
License denials, suspensions, and revocations	0	

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

Last meeting: April 4, 2024

Next meeting: To Be Determined

Agendas and draft minutes are available at the Board website:

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