



# ANNUAL REPORT

New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

FISCAL YEAR 2023

# Annual Report

## *Fiscal Year 2023*

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# 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, and Hard of Hearing New Mexicans and their families, friends and colleagues.

The agency worked throughout the year to address the shift that occurred from a mostly virtual day-to-day life for the New Mexico Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community to being in person day-to-day life on a variety of areas during the Fiscal Year of 2023. As I mentioned in the FY22 report, things had just begun to truly open, and there were still several areas where things were in a hybrid format across the state. This year was the first real year we began to see more and more of the results of the shift to a virtual space hindering the ability of many organizations and workplaces to go back to the typical accessibility tools of the in-person life and work. Several tools had been created during the last three years in technology that has long been seen as a niche tool. For example, virtual meeting spaces had finally begun to see tools such as Automated/Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) become a viable tool in providing captioning services. Another example is that many American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters were able to work from home and provide wonderful services in a virtual space.

Now with everything open to the extent that it was during FY23, those tools such as the ones pointed out were no longer available to our community. Another thing we saw, was a drop in one of our performance measures for relay services, due to people now working in the office or visiting offices they have not been to in some time. The loss of tools like ASR and not needing relay services meant an increased need for in person services. This was not unique only to New Mexico, unfortunately the same metrics decrease that we saw in New Mexico, was also seen nationally. A recent report from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) showed that from FY22 to FY23, there was a 77% increase in filings of discrimination based on disability, with hearing loss being the most common litigation issue currently. This increase in litigation

prompted an updated EEOC guidance which was posted January of this year but with more and more situations still occurring, it is clear there are other factors. One area in particular was in the availability of ASL interpretation services. When an ASL Interpreter does not have to travel across the state, their ability to jump in and out of meetings virtually is unquestionably more possible and to that point we don't need as many to provide a high level of services throughout the state. When everything was once again open, travel then played a factor and the services became difficult to secure regardless of how much time in advance the request for interpreters was made. The new barriers that popped up due to the drop off in using virtual meetings accessibility tools has created a catch-22 of sorts. There are two possibilities for captioning in person, viable ASR exists only on a select number of devices, and typically to function well, needs a high speed internet connection. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is captioning provided by a trained captionist, and can be done for in person meetings, but there is a significant cost associated with it and also has similar issues as ASL interpreters in terms of availability. The catch-22 is, virtual accessibility tools are now very familiar to the general hearing community and easier to secure, but it creates an unbalanced dynamic where individuals with a hearing loss have to keep using virtual tools instead of being able to be in person. This is becoming a situation where a lot of the accessibility work we need to do is built around trying to find a balanced approach that doesn't neglect the person with a hearing loss.

Due to all of these factors in addition to moving forward with attempting to hire more staff, we had to maintain a hybrid working system as the standard practice, this was mostly to continue to maintain the high level of services that we have been providing. This hybrid system did not mean no in-person services, as we see from our other legislative metrics that we exceed in almost all other areas, with the exception of relay services. This was possible only due to the workload all of the staff at the agency have taken on. In order to maintain the high level of services as we continue to see more requests for in person services, we must fulfill our agencies vacant positions, and we intend to be fully staffed by FY25. Each department worked consistently throughout the year to work on addressing these new various barriers as a result of the virtual transition to in person interaction across the state to ensure that communication access was provided on every level for our community. In the P1 you will see a number of ways that we explained responsibilities and offered training opportunities. We also explain the impacts of returning to in-person interactions whether that is in work environments, or appointments with tools such as ASR and virtual meetings on relay services. Our staff are traveling across the state providing services, as well as outreach for the community in regard to our equipment distribution program.

Relay services saw a varied level of demand, but an overall steady decline with the reopening of the state. As I mentioned in previous reports, the wave follows almost exactly every time services were limited due to closures, and the correlation makes it difficult to predict the future usage if there should be a closure again. Assuming that we

continue to operate with no restrictions in the state it can be assumed traditional relay use will decline with some exceptions. In the recent Notice of Proposed Rule Making, Order on June 12, 2023 and the follow up on August 7, 2023 regarding “Communication Act of 1934” and “Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010” (CVAA), as well as the “Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech to Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities” CG Dockets No. 10-213 and CG Docket No. 10-213 were addressing access to “Video Conferencing”, CG Docket No. 23-161 which utilized a variety of virtual accessibility tools, including some relay. Video Conferencing Tools, much like the telephone in years past, have been the way of communication for the last three years. While I stated that ASR is a viable tool, it should be noted this is not available across all of the video conferencing platforms. With Video Conferencing now almost ubiquitously used, it appears that relay services should be across the board, made available to them. It should also be done in a way that reduces difficulty and complexity for the end user and operates in an almost seamless fashion with the rest of the suite of services in video conferencing. When the CVAA was created in 2010 many of the tools we now use were not created yet or in their infancy. This is no longer the case and as such the rules need to reflect this change. In short, in addition to the growing potential use of Real Time Text, which was severely interrupted due to the pandemic, we will likely see an integration of some form of relay services in virtual conferencing platforms. It is unclear what the impact if any will be on our minute usages, but this does reflect an earlier fact that video conferencing is here to stay and will be used to assist our community moving forward with relay services. This hasn’t happened yet and that is clearly reflected in our minute decline for the performance measures.

Our Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program continued to see demand, and with a new contract in place we were able to add even more equipment, that will benefit from some of the recent developments with Automated/Automatic Captioning. We explored the use of tools such as the iPhone through a pilot program this year that enables users to use the captioning tools both in person and virtually as well as ensure that anyone who is eligible, is able to have a device capable of such features. The pilot was a resounding success, and we are looking on expanding into the more Internet of Things type devices, especially with the most recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), and targets on broadband growth in the states. Our end goal is, by keeping up with the broadband expansion plans in the state and across the nation that we continue to move from legacy based telecommunications technology to modern and sophisticated tools, with a team of people in our agency and through our contracted partner to help educate the community on the tools and technology that can possibly remove isolation and offset the confusion we see from the community in using modern devices.

With our DeafBlind, Deaf Plus, and Senior community we continue to see a high demand for Support Service Provider (SSP) services, case management, and

transportation. The funding for the Support Service Program is critical for some of our most vulnerable members of the community. The growth in the demand with everything open once again has made it very much a demand for our new contractor to hire more staff and fill this need. We have already received more requests to include more for the Senior community than in years past, due to the aging population and need for education directly in ASL on topics such as long-term care, technology literacy, and more. This community also needs more non-emergency medical visits and community interaction due to isolation, and preventive or continuation of care. This program remains a necessary and critical service that requires continued funding and consideration for possibly more funding to offset increasing costs across the board for these services.

*G. Nathan Gomme*

G. Nathan Gomme  
NMCDHH Executive Director

# Letter from Chair

*John Hooper*

For over 22 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 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. All of this started in a single office, and now 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 grow 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, this creates cause for concern, and needs to be addressed.

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 expanding the Telecommunications Equipment Program with their new iPhone project, resources in providing 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. Often times, the hearing population is simply unaware or unsure of best practices in the spectrum of hearing loss due to lack of personal experience, knowledge or support. 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 2023.*



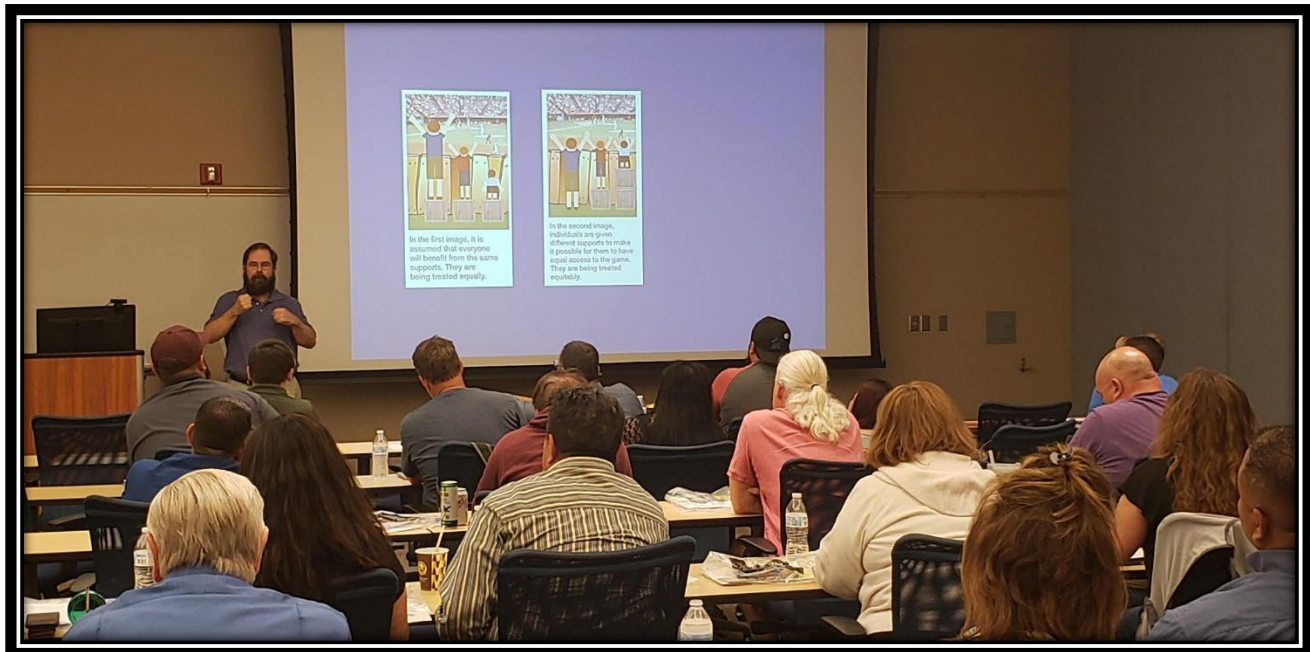
*Corina Gutiérrez was a moderator for the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters during their community conversation series in November.*



*Corina Gutiérrez and Roger Robb shared their experiences as patients and advocates with the 3-North Leadership Team at University of New Mexico Hospital in January.*



*Roger Robb performed 86 presentations during FY23.*





*Roger Robb collaborated with UNMH hospital to make a Vlog explaining Patient Rights and Responsibilities. This video will be shared with Deaf patients when they enter the hospital.*

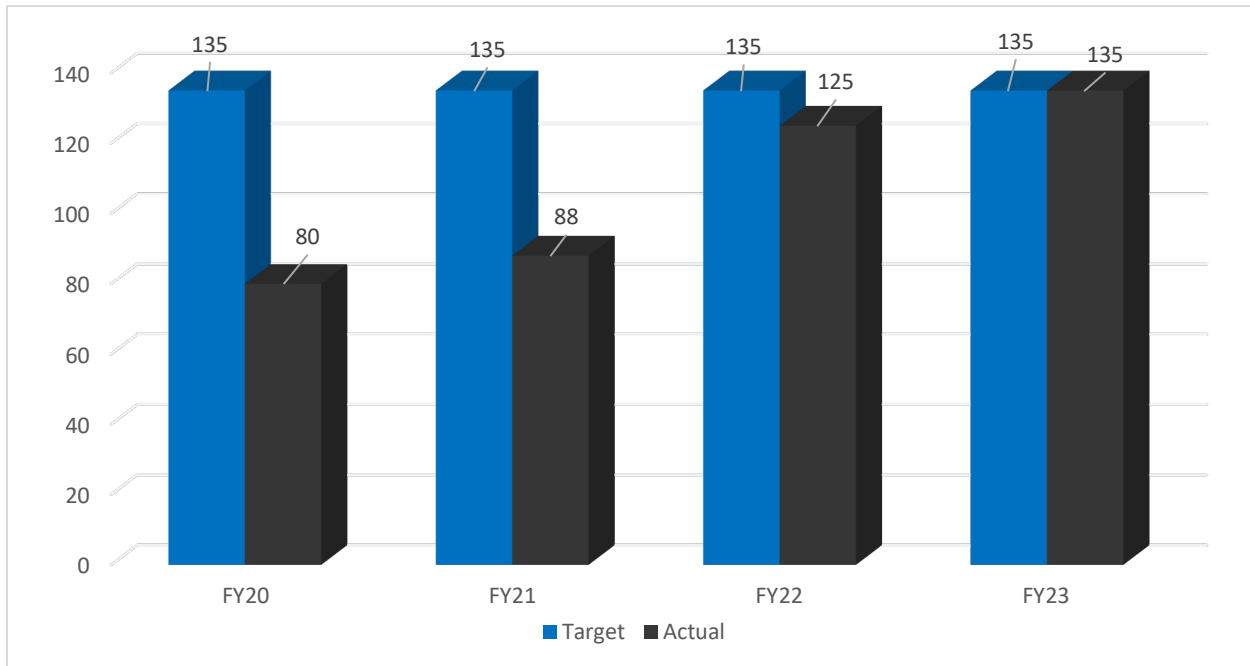




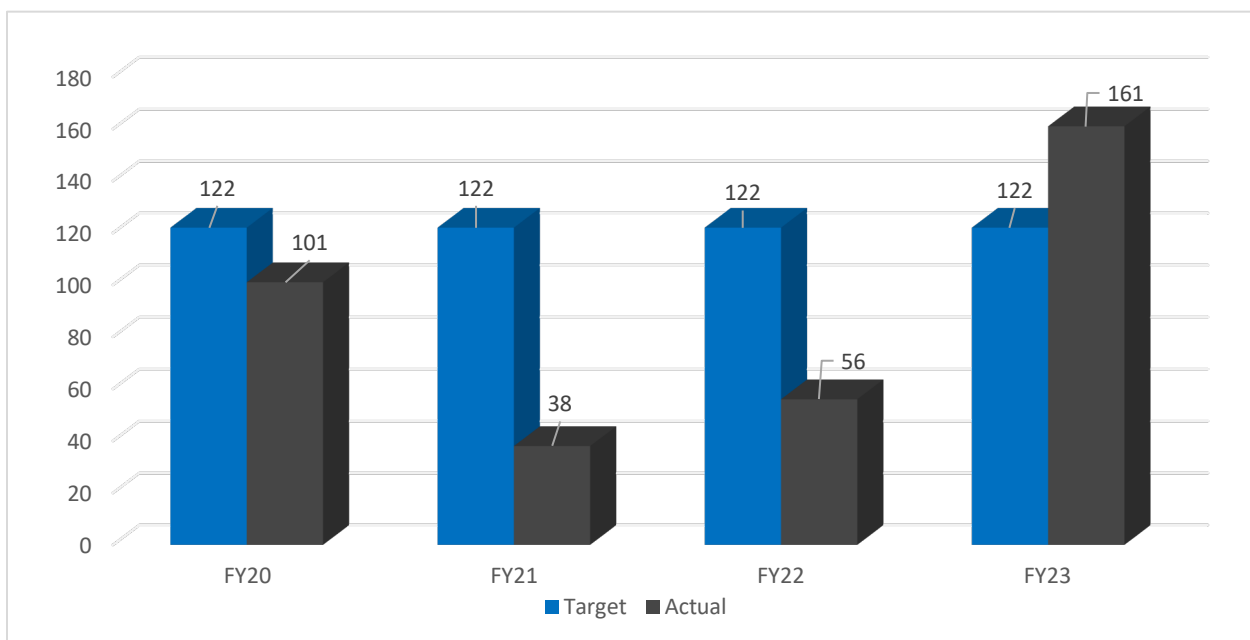
*Roger Robb continues to collaborate with APD to produce a series of Vlogs on the use of Placards that identify Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, and how to safely interact with them. The video will be shared with the public and officers in FY24.*

# Legislative Performance Measures

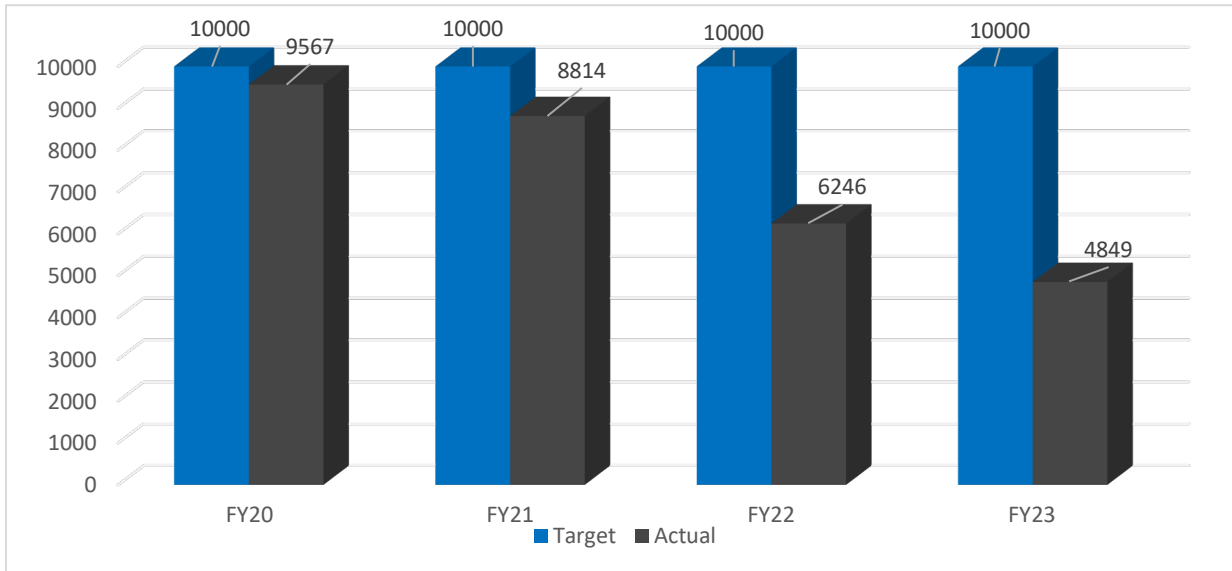
*Number of Workshops & Training Sessions – 100% of FY23 Target*



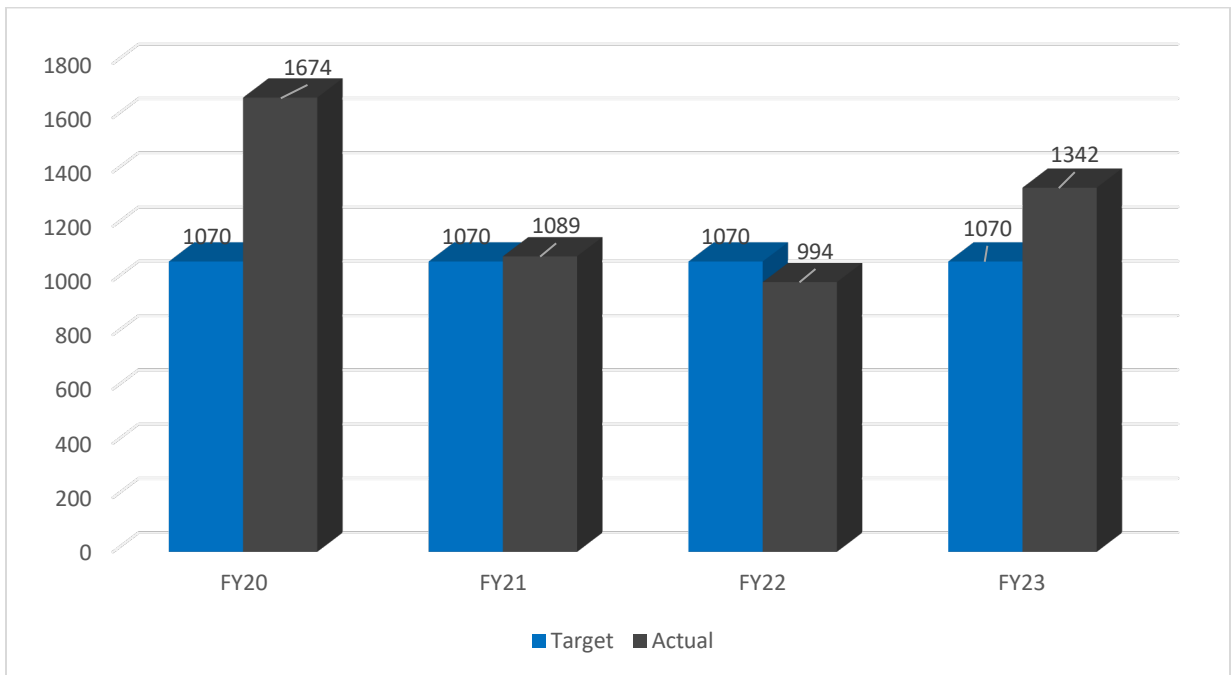
*Number of Outreach Events Coordinated – 132% of FY23 Target*



*Average Number of Relay Minutes per Month – 48% of FY23 Target*

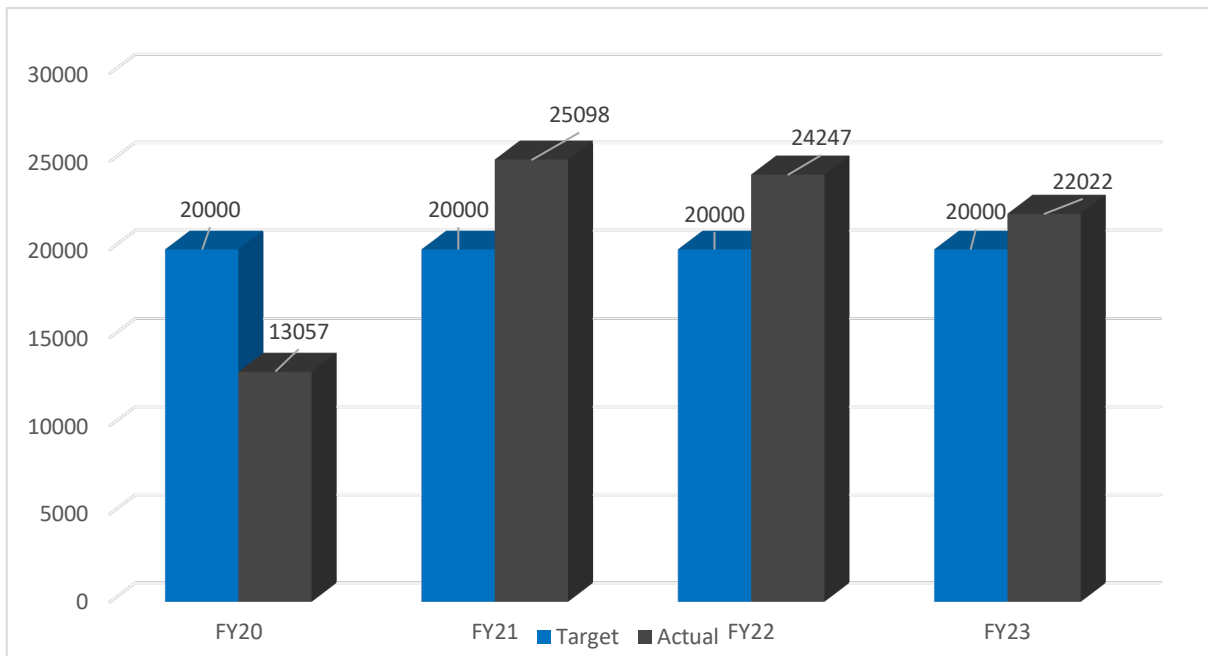


*Number of Accessible Technology Distributions – 125% of FY23 Target*

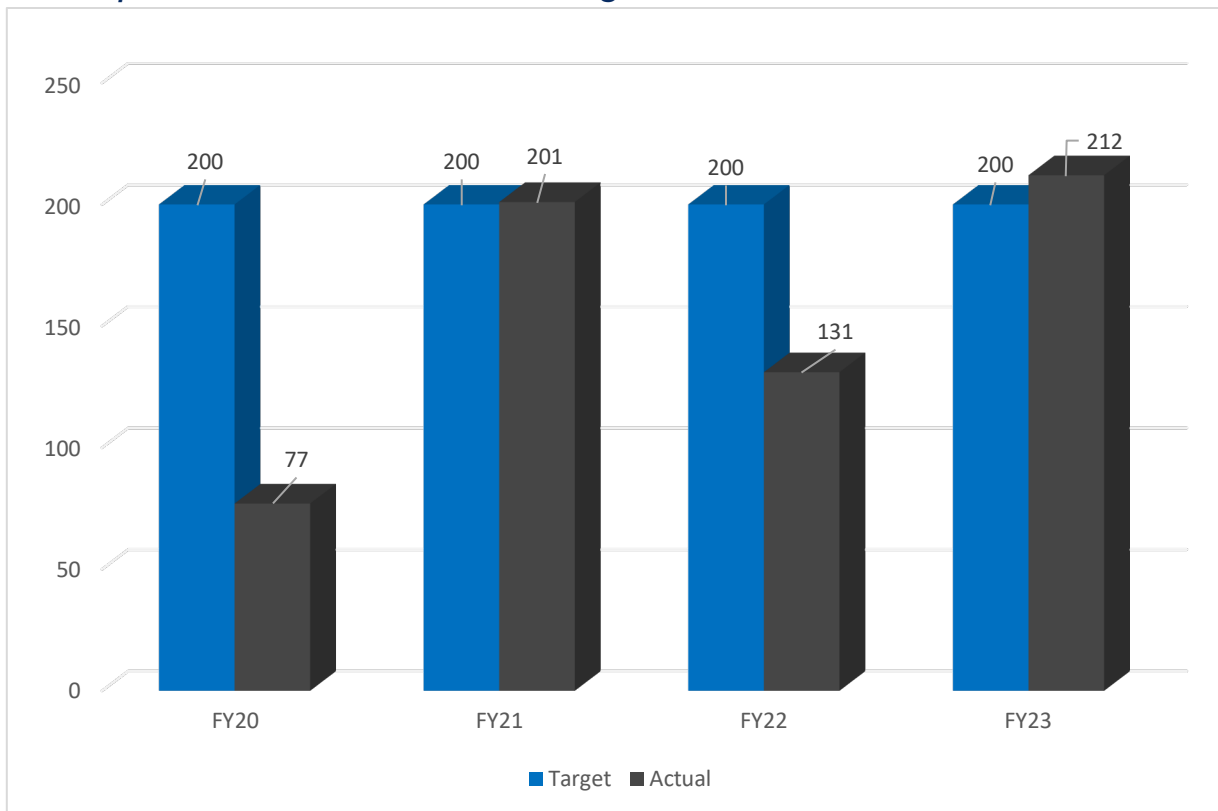




*Number of Communication Barriers Addressed – 110% of Target*



*Number of Interpreters in CDHH Sponsored Professional Development – 106% of FY23 Target*

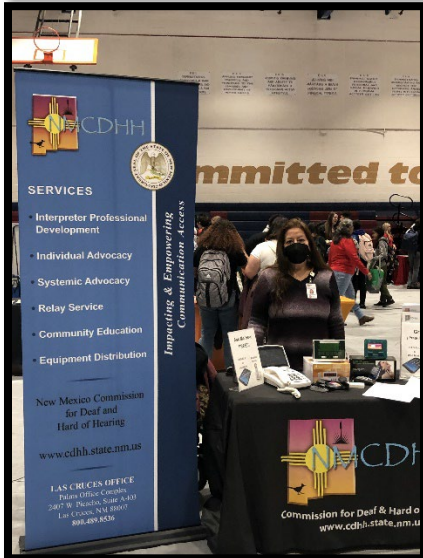




# NMCDHH Outreach FY23

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 161 booths, with 10,905 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 active 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
  - Jason Siergey, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Specialist
  - Hearing Loss Technology Coordinator (Vacant and pending transition)
  
- Las Cruces Office
  - 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 also take the information and 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 address communication barriers with law



enforcement, healthcare providers, clinical offices, local employers, attorneys, non-profit organizations, public schools, Social Security Administration (SSA), Public Employees Retirement Administration of NM (PERA), judicial courts, daycare centers, detention centers, Amazon, Bureau of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, University of New Mexico (UNM), Accessible & Functional Needs, Albuquerque Mayor's Office, Department of Transportation (DOT), National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Popejoy Hall, and the Department of Health (DOH) in the state of New Mexico. 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 adhered to. Public awareness and educational trainings are an important tool and often provide a proactive resource when provided to the community.

### **Community Advocacy**

Our advocacy staff continues to work very hard with our community members to reduce communication barriers. They also continue to work with the community members related to COVID-19 to ensure that they follow the protocols when they are scheduled to meet with the advocacy staff in-person.

Director of Community Advocacy, Corina Gutiérrez, worked with many organizations, businesses, and community members during FY23.

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

- Continues to participate in monthly/quarterly meetings with the Patient and Family Advisory Committee (PFAC) for University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH), the Interagency Transition Alliance (ITA), and the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force. Ms. Gutiérrez also participated in quarterly meetings with two outside agencies, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD).
- Worked closely with staff from a non-profit organization to clarify their responsibility to provide an interpreter for weekly meetings through Zoom and for an individual's transition from a correctional facility to a halfway house. This collaboration was successful.
- Worked with an individual who utilizes ASL and has a new supervisor in a medical setting to ensure the supervisor understood their responsibility to provide an ASL interpreter for staff meetings, trainings, etc. when that individual is present. The outcome of this work was successful.
- Successfully advocated for an individual to receive appropriate communication accommodation for their meeting with PERA utilizing the Zoom platform. At first, PERA suggested that this individual use captions to read the information presented. Ms. Gutiérrez explained the advantages and disadvantages regarding captions and ASL interpreters. It is important to provide a clear understanding of the difference between the effectiveness of captions, versus ASL interpreters for various constituents. The captions they were utilizing were ASR captions which at this time do not provide equal communication access in situations where both parties need to understand what is being said in spoken language and sign language, and the

subsequent interpretation. Additionally, ASR captions are typically not as accurate as those provided by CART, and rely on machine learning for accuracy, instead of a person listening and captioning the content as it is presented. ASR captions also cannot adapt to different situations encountered, such as background noise, enunciation, context, and jargon, which can all mean that the captions are potentially not available, or not understood. Something as simple as the distance between the speaker and the microphone can have a significant impact on the quality of ASR captions. In addition, these tools for communicating are passive tools and don't allow for expressive communication from the individual who has a hearing loss and uses ASL. In the end, PERA understood the complexities of factoring for equal communication access and provided an ASL interpreter for their meeting.

- Met with the Deaf Senior group, which is part of the Deaf Senior Citizens of Greater Albuquerque (DSCGA), to discuss some of the things they would like to see in the future for their community. The Deaf Seniors would like to have workshops/training provided on a variety of topics critical to their age group, such as scams that are likely to occur as they continue to age. They were also seeking more information about the services available to them through the Commission. Ms. Gutiérrez will be meeting with the Deaf Seniors periodically moving forward as there were several unaddressed matters that will be rectified in future contract for this community.
- Successfully advocated for an individual to ensure that an ASL interpreter was present for their meeting with the case representative at the SSA office. Initially, SSA stated that the individual must call through Video Relay Service (VRS), however the individual wanted to meet in-person and go through all paperwork with the case representative. This was important to the individual to ensure that they fully understood everything related to this important and sensitive matter. Ms. Gutiérrez explained that in this type of situation, communication would be more effective if they met in-person and reviewed the paperwork together with an on-site ASL interpreter. The outcome was successful.
- Successfully advocated for an individual at a local corporation to ensure that an ASL interpreter was present for their meeting with management at a corporate facility regarding transitioning from one facility to another. Ms. Gutiérrez also ensured that the management at both locations understand that it is their responsibility to provide appropriate communication access for their Deaf employee.
- Ms. Gutiérrez and Community Education Specialist Roger Robb were invited to tour the Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit (NSICU) at UNMH. They had the opportunity to visit the unit, identify communication access issues, and provided feedback on how the unit could provide better communication access for the Deaf, DeafBlind, Speech Disabled, and Hard of Hearing community.
- Attended the Albuquerque Public School Apprenticeship Council Career Fair to support one of the ITA committee members from the Workforce Solutions Center 16 that hosted the event. At the event, they had 43 employees in attendance and approximately 600 hearing, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing students attended from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Estancia, Los Lunas and Rio Rancho.
- Worked with a Deaf individual regarding communication access at their workplace at a local healthcare provider. The individual needed an interpreter during her training

and when she took work related tests. Initially, the supervisor did not think the individual needed an interpreter in those situations, but Ms. Gutiérrez clarified them that because English is not the individual's first language, the employer is still responsible to provide an interpreter when the individual requests that accommodation. The employer finally provided an interpreter, and the individual was happy with the result.

- Worked with an outpatient therapist at Life Link in Santa Fe to discuss communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers. The therapist wanted to learn more about appropriate communication access for everyone. Ms. Gutiérrez also recommended having Mr. Roger Robb, provide Hearing Loss Sensitivity training for their staff. She also gave the therapist a fact sheet on how to find an interpreter. The outcome was positive because Life Link provided an interpreter for their patients with hearing loss.
- Mr. Gomme, Mr. Robb, and Ms. Gutiérrez met with the Executive Director of Language Access at Presbyterian Hospital to discuss the partnership of hosting a Community Needs Assessment Learning Session for our Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community. The purpose of this event is to help them identify health needs in our community. They will use the information we share to guide Presbyterian's work for the next three years. We met a few times to plan two community session events on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10am to 12pm during the first quarter of FY24. Mr. Robb is developing two vlogs on this event, one which will explain the purpose of the Town Hall, and one providing direction on how to get to the Presbyterian facility. These Vlogs will be shared with the community early in FY24.
- Since FY22, Mr. Gomme and Ms. Gutiérrez have met with the Program Director for AccesSOS several times, regarding the implementation of their app in New Mexico. AccesSOS is a tech nonprofit organization who has developed an app to allow for emergency communication. This is not to be confused with text-to-911, which works without a downloaded app, using your existing texting services. The app is intended for Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members, as well as people with speech disabilities or limited English proficiency. This program could potentially allow members of the community to contact emergency services quickly, without having to call them. How it works: AccesSOS needs to be downloaded and your information has to be added to the program to create a profile. Once that is done, the next time you use the program in a space that the program works it will automatically get your geolocation from the phone and sends that to 911 call takers along with the information about the emergency. The app is free to the public. AccesSOS can currently be used to contact emergency services in Santa Fe. The director initially during discussions wanted to expand accessibility in the Albuquerque area. However, Mr. Gomme suggested expanding it to Bernalillo County, not just the city of Albuquerque itself. Mr. Gomme and Ms. Gutiérrez provided resources for the director to contact and work with when the AccesSOS is set up in Bernalillo County. As of reporting on this discussion, AccesSOS has since added Bernalillo County. Mr. Gomme also made a note that the limit to these two areas may create inequity and hopes that they continue to expand. They may work with our community to educate

them on how to use this service on their mobile devices.

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

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

- Successfully worked with an optometrist to ensure they understood their responsibility to provide an ASL interpreter for an individual. After this meeting, the optometrist worked with an interpreter referral agency to secure an interpreter for the individual's appointment, resulting in a positive outcome for all involved.
- Has been working more on how to develop an ASL Vlog on her own, that can be edited with the necessary captions added. In previous productions, Ms. Sandoval would assist Community Education Specialist, Mr. Roger Robb, after he had worked on them. Now she has sufficient experience, through assisting Mr. Robb. After selecting a topic, she worked with Mr. Robb to develop a script and create an ASL gloss, which Mr. Robb provided feedback on. Then, they worked together to do the video shoot, this time with Ms. Sandoval leading the process. Ms. Sandoval then edited and added captions to the video and shared it with Mr. Robb and her supervisor, Ms. Gutiérrez. This opportunity to learn, practice and refine her skills will enable her to work on Vlogs on various topics solo in the future. This is part of Ms. Gutiérrez's plan for Ms. Sandoval to be prepared to do Vlog work when/if Mr. Robb is not available.
- Spent several months working with the manager of a rural SSA office to ensure they understand their responsibility to provide an interpreter, when requested, for Deaf individuals who have an appointment at the SSA office. Initially, they could not provide an on-site interpreter, due to the inability to find an in-person interpreter through referral services. Instead, they encouraged Deaf consumers to use Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) or written communication. These two approaches are not effective communication approaches for this specific situation. Ms. Sandoval clarified to the SSA representative that English is not always the first language for individuals with hearing loss, and that many members of the community would likely have a similar barrier, therefore they aren't able to rely on written communication. Following several months of discussion, Ms. Sandoval was able to meet with the manager and a Deaf individual through the Zoom platform along with an interpreter. This allowed Ms. Sandoval to educate both SSA and the Deaf individual on using VRI effectively, and the state-wide challenge of finding interpreting services. The outcome was successful.
- Worked with a local public school to ensure that Deaf staff receive appropriate accommodations, so they can do their job effectively with full communication access. By the end of the meeting, they were able to develop a plan to ensure that appropriate accommodations will be provided.
- Worked with the parent of a Deaf child to advocate for ASL interpretation of a musical performance at a local theater, which initially did not want to provide interpreters. Ms. Sandoval successfully advocated for the Deaf child, and the theater provided ASL interpreters for the performance.

- Worked with a local healthcare facility in Bernalillo County to ensure that they understood their requirements for providing an interpreter for a Deaf patient. Initially the facility did not understand their responsibility to provide an interpreter when requested, or that different individuals with hearing loss, have different effective communication tools, and that they are required to address each situation based on those effective communication tools. While the facility had successfully communicated with some patients with hearing loss through written communication in the past, this did not mean it would be effective for all individuals with hearing loss. Ms. Sandoval informed the facility of their obligations under Title II and III of the ADA, and that not all Deaf people can communicate and understand information in the same way. In a successful conclusion, the facility provided an interpreter for the appointment.
- Worked with a credit union to ensure that they understood their responsibility for providing an ASL interpreter for a Deaf senior individual who wanted to understand and learn about buying a mobile home and property. Initially, the bank did not provide this individual with effective communication access, but Ms. Sandoval worked with them and educated them on how important it is to provide an interpreter for any Deaf customers. Eventually, they provided an interpreter for this individual resulting in a positive outcome.
- Worked for a significant amount of time with a Deaf senior individual to have access in discussions related to their health insurance. The individual needed assistance to obtain an interpreter for a meeting with their benefits office to review their options. Ms. Sandoval successfully worked with the office and the individual to schedule an interpreter for their appointment.
- Ms. Sandoval advocated for a Hard of Hearing individual, as a patient of a local hospital, to obtain an interpreter for their appointments. At first the hospital did not provide the individual with effective communication access, although they repeatedly requested an ASL interpreter, the hospital continued to reschedule the individual's appointment because they were not able to secure an interpreter. Ms. Sandoval provided support and information so they could advocate effectively, and in the end the individual was able to have information added to their file that they require an ASL interpreter for any medical appointments, the hospital subsequently was able to provide interpreters for the individual's appointment.

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

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

- Successfully advocated for a DeafBlind individual in a medical setting. The medical site did not have the individual's necessary communication requirements information in their system. The patients' additional disabilities necessitated an in-person interpreter. The medical provider updated the patient's information in their system, and the individual had an interpreter for the most recent appointment.
- Worked with an individual regarding a Homeowners' Association (HOA) meeting. He provided the individual with a fact sheet on how to find an interpreter and encouraged the individual to work with HOA. The HOA accommodated the individual

and provided an ASL interpreter for their meeting, allowing the individual to express themselves and share their concerns about the neighborhood.

- Advocated for a Hard of Hearing individual in a medical setting where the individual had a hard time understanding the staff due to them wearing masks. Mr. Stidham worked with the medical center to help them find, and purchase, clear masks. These masks allow staff to communicate easier with Deaf/Hard of Hearing patients who practice lipreading.
- Worked very hard with two charter schools to educate them about the importance of providing an ASL interpreter for parent-teacher conferences, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and other meetings as needed. Mr. Stidham successfully advocated for Deaf individuals and the charter schools provided an ASL interpreter for meetings when requested.
- Advocated for a DeafBlind individual with a medical facility to ensure that they understand their responsibility to provide an on-site interpreter. Mr. Stidham explained that VRI for a DeafBlind patient does not provide effective communication. For example, the patient is not able to see the interpreter using VRI because the tablet is too small. On-site interpreters result in effective communication for this patient. Ultimately, the facility provided an on-site interpreter for the appointment.
- Worked with a law firm to educate them that it was their responsibility to provide an interpreter when they meet with Deaf clients, which the law firm agreed to, and did provide, for a meeting with a Deaf individual.
- Worked with a manager from the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) to ensure that they provided a sign language interpreter for a Deaf individual during their written test, which they had initially said they would not do. Mr. Stidham worked with two MVD site supervisors, who had prior experience with using interpreters, to educate the local manager on providing an interpreter, which they were successfully able to arrange for the test.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual at a medical facility to ensure that the facility understood their responsibility to provide an interpreter. The facility initially did not provide an interpreter for a Deaf family member of a patient. Mr. Stidham educated 17 of them about companionship allowances, provided information on ADA accommodation responsibilities for family members, and a factsheet on how to find interpreters. The outcome was that they provided the Deaf individual with an interpreter for their family member's appointments.
- Worked with a local school to ensure that they understood that they cannot use a family member to interpret for a Deaf parent during IEP meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Mr. Stidham provided the school with fact sheets and ADA information as well. He successfully advocated for a Deaf individual, and the school provided interpreters for the remaining meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
- Worked with a local courthouse to successfully advocate for a Deaf individual. The individual reported that he had a communication barrier at the courthouse and needed an interpreter for his court date. Mr. Stidham reached out to the courthouse and worked with them. The courthouse had a contract issue with the contracted interpreter referral agency, but it was resolved. The courthouse confirmed that the individual will have an interpreter for their next court date.

- Worked with the Department of Transportation (DOT) about providing an on-site interpreter for a Deaf employee. They often have last minute meetings and trainings that their Deaf employee is unable to attend because there is no interpreter. Mr. Stidham reviewed the process of obtaining interpreters with them and discussed the need to allocate funding for interpreting costs. They were able to do so and have since provided interpreters for the meetings and trainings.
- Worked with a medical facility to provide an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual. The facility initially did not have the resources to find an interpreter, but Mr. Stidham was able to provide them with the necessary fact sheets with pertinent information. Eventually, they were able to arrange VRI for the patient's appointment.
- Mr. Stidham advocated for a Deaf employee of a local moving and delivery company to educate them that they needed to provide this individual with an interpreter for their team meetings on a daily basis. These meetings provide updates every day to update the plan and route changes, and how many packages to deliver, and the individual faced a communication barrier understanding this information without an interpreter. Mr. Stidham sent them the information on the VRI fact sheet, and he continued to work with them until they finally provided the individual with an interpreter through VRI.
- Mr. Stidham worked with a member of a county Senior Affairs department to educate them on how to provide an ASL interpreter for any Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers, who needed assistance completing the intake form to apply for services. Mr. Stidham successfully advocated for the Deaf Senior individual, ensuring that they provided an interpreter to complete the forms.

During the first quarter, Staff members Ms. Gutiérrez, Ms. Sandoval and Mr. Stidham attended two beneficial webinars - "To Ask or Not to Ask: That is the ADA Disability Inquiry Question" hosted by SPO, Southwest ADA Center, and New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability and Service for those with Disabilities.

During the second quarter, Ms. Gutiérrez, Ms. Sandoval, and Mr. Stidham attended a webinar provided by HKNC: "3rd Annual National Disability Employment Awareness". This particular webinar focused on the rights of our veteran community and the specific types of support and resources that would be most beneficial to them. The information is of high value since there are typically some resources that are only for our veteran community.

Ms. Sandoval and Mr. Stidham attended 2 other webinars the second quarter: "Title III of the ADA: Common Myths and Mix-Ups", and "Providing Reasonable Accommodation to Veterans with Disabilities and Human Trafficking Awareness & Response" both sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center and provided by the State of New Mexico General Services Department.

### **Community Education**

Information, recommendations, workshops, and potential solutions are offered to private and public agencies, professional organizations, businesses, and individuals in areas 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. Often this work is done by our Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb. Other members of the NMCDHH, or one of our vendors, will provide those specialized trainings as appropriate. Trainings were provided via a hybrid of methods.

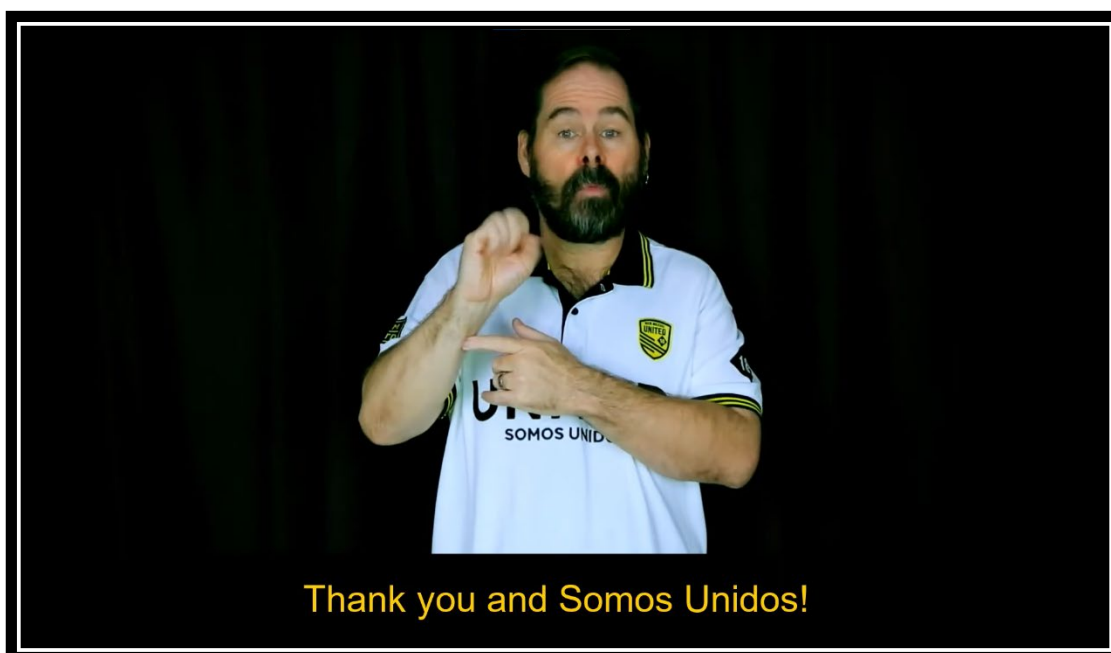
The Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb and his colleagues provided 135 presentations/trainings during FY23. Topics included American Sign Language (ASL), Deaf Culture, Fingerspelling, Deaf Patient Experiences, Deaf Self Advocacy Training, NMCDHH Overview, Effective Communication, Emergency Preparedness, and Hearing Loss Sensitivity. These presentations were made to: Albuquerque Police Academy, ASL Academy, Central New Mexico (CNM) Community College Accessibility Services & Law Enforcement Academy, City of Albuquerque ADA Advisory Council, Hodgins Elementary School, Las Cruces Police Department, Santa Fe Police Department, Solace Sexual Assault Services, Traffic Safety Center, UNM Signed Language Interpreter Program (UNM SLIP), UNM Hospital (UNMH), UNMH 3 North Leadership, Educators Group, Operating Room Coordinators, & Women's Health Center, and many other agencies, organizations, and businesses. Mr. Robb provided 86 presentations during FY23. The other staff in our agency contributed as well, providing an additional 49 presentations.

The Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb:

- Provided advocacy and information to 12 different entities: Albuquerque Police Ambassadors, Albuquerque Police Department, Albuquerque Public School, City of Albuquerque ADA Advisory Council, Las Cruces Police Department, Lovelace Healthcare System, National Weather Service, Popejoy Hall, Rio Rancho Police Department, Santa Fe Police Department, and University of New Mexico Hospital.
- Produced and disseminated 4 new informational Vlogs. He produced 1 Vlog on Albuquerque Police Department Placard project, 1 Vlog for the National Weather Service, 1 Vlog on New Mexico United Deaf Night, and 1 Vlog on UNMH's Patient's Rights & Responsibilities. It was important that those Vlogs were shared with our community to ensure that our community understood and followed what was going on with the placards, weather situations, the Deaf Awareness event, and Patient's Rights and Responsibilities. Mr. Robb also worked on the preproduction and review of several other Vlogs and informational videos which will be utilized in the upcoming fiscal year during the first quarter.
- Mr. Robb continued to participate in UNMH Patient and Family Advisory Committee (PFAC) – Ambulatory. Committee members such as Mr. Robb were able to provide input regarding the new hospital area under construction, to help ensure everything is more accessible to individuals with hearing loss. We had the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to our community about publications (posters, signage, and such), to make them more accessible, perhaps by utilizing captions, subtitles, or videos in ASL. We also worked on a video explaining how to get to the surgical department from the new parking lot. PFAC requested the ASL portion but agreed to wait until the Patient's Rights & Responsibilities video is completed, which Mr. Robb subsequently completed during the fiscal year.



- Mr. Robb continued to serve on the City of Albuquerque ADA Advisory Council (ADAAC) Mr. Robb was asked to provide a short presentation about Deaf Culture which he did during the first quarter. He also participated in the Open Meetings Act training. During the second quarter, there was a situation where interpreters were not being provided for the meetings and quorum was not being met due to the inability to understand what was occurring during the meeting. This was rectified and the value of communication access was spotlighted in a way it hadn't previously been. During the third quarter, Mr. Robb was elected as Vice-Chair and will serve as Chair when the Chairperson is unable to do so. There was also a committee meeting to discuss revising the ADAAC website to make it more visually friendly. During the fourth quarter, Roger continued to provide input on how to improve the council and invite different disability groups to explain and educate us on their disabilities. That will help the council know how to better serve the different communities with disabilities in our city and report the findings to the mayor.



*The Commission and New Mexico United collaborated to host a Deaf Night Out. Roger Robb made a Vlog regarding the first annual Deaf Night Out, how to purchase tickets, and where to find seating at the stadium. The event was a success, with over 100 Deaf people from around the state attending.*

### **Telecommunication Equipment Distribution**

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 our community who are curious about which devices work best for their needs.

Throughout the year, we encountered certain challenges regarding equipment availability. Some long time and familiar items, such as the ClearSounds Quattro Pro, were discontinued, while others including Panasonic amplified phones, Sonic Alert notification systems, and our only effective fire alerting systems faced delays due to back orders. We have been actively evaluating new equipment options for the Request for Proposal and will be adding them to the collection of devices for upcoming fiscal years. In addition to this, there was a pilot program during the fiscal year to assess the viability and need to adapt the most recent iteration of iPhones. Smartphones have long needed accessories to make them accessible, but in recent years due to the work of advocates and developers, the smartphones have transformed into viable tools for our community. Under guidance from our Executive Director, we implemented a pilot program with the help of Mr. Stidham, Ms. Santillan, Ms. Gutiérrez, and Ms. Sandoval to recruit and work with a select group of individuals to see how much the iPhones with an e-sim card can help our community. The results were unanimously positive, with almost every user experiencing an increase in communication access and interaction in their communities. Mr. Siergey continued to work with the general community during the pilot testing and will be working with Mr. Stidham in the next fiscal year to implement the full program with iPhones.

Mr. Siergey responds to inquiries about the TEDP program sent to the @info email address, provides information on the equipment available through the program, provides resources to organizations seeking equipment for their employees/clients, helps recipients with equipment returns when needed, and works with individuals to find the equipment best suited for their communication needs.

- A longtime TEDP client came by the Albuquerque office on an appointment to seek a new phone to fit his current needs. With the evolution of technology and methods of communication, the client needed to test and use the current crop of equipment on the table, allowing him to try different phones and look at the latest accessories to determine which notification systems would work best for his needs. He was able to walk away with devices comfortable and effective to him. Mr. Siergey guided the client throughout the process, including filling out the application and gathering the documents that he had with him. He said he appreciated receiving the equipment over the years which has helped him with his communication needs since 2009.
- Assisted an individual in upgrading their notification system, which they had been using since 2015. He worked with this client by describing each notification system, to help them make a choice, which they successfully did after providing the necessary documents and application.

- Assisted a resident of Santa Fe, who had been using their equipment since 2015, to upgrade. Once the resident selected the best equipment for their communication needs, they successfully completed an application and received new equipment. The individual was very grateful for Mr. Siergey's assistance.
- Mr. Siergey and Community Advocate Specialist Susana Santillan worked together to assist several residents of Southern New Mexico in selecting equipment and completing applications.
- A therapist working with their client in the Albuquerque area reached out to Mr. Siergey to work together to get an iPad for their client's communication needs. Mr. Siergey worked along with the therapist to gather the documents for the TEDP's requirements such as the application and other required information.
- Communicated with and assisted a person living in Santa Fe in renewing their application for an iPad. He also provided resources for equipment that is more closely aligned with what the individual was seeking, which our program does not carry or distribute.
- Mr. Siergey collaborated with Ms. Santillan and Ms. Gutiérrez to help a Deaf couple fulfill the documentation requirements for equipment. Eventually, all the necessary documentation was received, resulting in the approval of their equipment application. Mr. Siergey informed them that the iPad would be delivered after the start of FY24, while the accessories were expected to arrive before the end of FY23.
- Worked with an agency and a person with a speech disability to acquire an iPad. He also assisted with a request to evaluate the addition of an app that is not included in our iPad speech package.
- Mr. Siergey collaborated with Ms. Santillan to ensure that several applicants from southern New Mexico have met the criteria of the application processes. Eventually, all of the applicants met the requirements.

Mr. Siergey also responded to inquiries about equipment forwarded from the "Ask An Expert" email address which includes:

- Provided information on notification systems to a few who asked about alert systems.
- Provided and shared resources for an employer who has a deaf employee.
- Provided information on Smoke and CO2 Alarms that TEDP currently has to distribute, and also referred individuals to Teltex for more options/selections as needed.

Phone	Total items distributed
Clarity Alto	16
Clarity Alto Plus	0
Clarity BT914	0

Clarity D704	0
Clarity D714	8
Clarity JV35	0
Clarity XLC2+	0
Clarity XLC7BT	0
Clarity XLC8	42
Clarity XLC8 with GLT	75
GLT	0
ClearSounds A1600BT	9
ClearSounds CSC600ER	11
Panasonic KX-TGM430B	0
Panasonic KX-TGM450S	11
Geemarc Ampli550	0
CapTel 840	12
<b>iPad</b>	
Deaf Package	72
Hard of Hearing Package	99
DeafBlind Package	0
Speech Package	18
<b>iPad mini</b>	0
Deaf Package	0
Hard of Hearing Package	27
DeafBlind Package	0
Speech Package	9
<b>iPhone</b>	
iPhone 14+	472
<b>Total Phone/iPad/iPhone Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>881</b>

<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Total items distributed</b>
Amplicom NL100 Neckloop	0
Bellman Mino with Neckloop	32
Bellman High Powered Neckloop (no device)	0
Clarity CE50 Bluetooth Neckloop	6
Clarity SR100 Super Phone Ringer	0
Clarity HA40 In-line Telephone Amplifier	0
ClearSounds Quattro Pro	0
ClearSounds ANS3000 Answering Machine	10
ClearSounds CS-CR200 Phone Ringer	5
ClearSounds CS-WIL95 Amplifier	0
Comfort Audio Duett Neckloop	40
Geemarc LH10PK Neckloop	0

Geemarc V2T-10	0
GLT with V2T-10	16
Griffin Labs SolaTone	0
Griffin Labs SolaTone Plus	0
Griffin Labs EMOTE	0
Krown RA 05 Amplified Ringer with Strobe	0
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA360	60
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA380	39
Serene Innovations RF-200 Alerting System	10
Serene Innovations SA-40 Cell Phone Amplifier	0
Serene Innovations UA-45 Universal Phone Amplifier	3
Silent Call Medallion Kit	110
SonicAlert HA360MKBR	100
SonicAlert HA360BRK	3
Surge Protector (Phones and accessories)	27
<b>Total Accessories Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>461</b>
<b>Total Overall Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>1,342</b>

### **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 Albuquerque, Cuba, Fort Sumner, Las Cruces, Los Lunas, Moriarty, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe, Shiprock, Tucumcari, and rural towns in Southern New Mexico. For the year-to-date, the Albuquerque and Las Cruces office attended 161 booths with 10,905 booth visitors. Mr. Stidham and Mr. Siergey from the Albuquerque office hosted 30 booth events and had 3,179 visitors at the events. Ms. Santillan from the Las Cruces office hosted 103 booth events and had 3,981 visitors at the events. Hamilton Relay, our state relay vendor also attended 28 booths and contributed 3,745 visitors to number of individuals who visited our booths at these events.

### **DeafBlind, Deaf Plus, Deaf Senior Services**

COPD-NM DeafBlind Services program is funded by a contract amendment with NMCDHH. The contract for DeafBlind services was initially provided through the Governor’s Commission on Disability and was transferred to NMCDHH in the fiscal year 2013. This is the last year for COPD-NM reporting, which is due to unforeseen circumstances. During this fiscal year, the Commission conducted an extensive search to find a replacement provider. Starting in Q1 of FY24, the program will be under a new vendor, Vancro. The number of DeafBlind and Deaf Plus Support Service Provider (SSP) users continues to provide for our DeafBlind and Deaf Plus Community members and at last check was at 48 users.

**Aggregated data:**

Total number of individuals served this time period (unduplicated count): 59

Total number of individuals who are DeafBlind (unduplicated count): 25

Total Number of Individuals Who Are DeafBlind by Region	Region 1	3
	Region 2	1
	Region 3	18
	Region 4	0
	Region 5	3

Total number of individuals who are Deaf Plus (unduplicated count): 20

Total Number of individuals Who Are Deaf+ by Region	Region 1	3
	Region 2	1
	Region 3	16
	Region 4	0
	Region 5	0

Total number of individuals who are older Deaf adults (unduplicated count): 14

Total Number of individuals Who Are older Deaf adults by Region	Region 1	2
	Region 2	4
	Region 3	8
	Region 4	0
	Region 5	0

Services were provided to residents in the following eight of New Mexico's thirty-three counties:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bernalillo</li><li>• Dona Ana</li><li>• Otero</li><li>• Rio Arriba</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• San Juan</li><li>• Sandoval</li><li>• Santa Fe</li><li>• Valencia</li></ul>
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Total number of SSP hours provided during this past year: 3,964.75

Of the 3,964.75 hours of SSP services provided, 243.50 (or 6.14%) of those hours included advocacy support.

Additional analysis shows that:

96% of the SSP assignments included transportation

28% of the SSP assignments included transportation to medical appointments

1% of the SSP assignments included transportation to legal appointments

4% of the SSP assignments included transportation to other appointments  
36% of the SSP assignments provided access to community events  
33% of the SSP assignments enabled the completion of independent living tasks such as shopping, going to restaurants, visiting friends and family, etc.

Total number of SSP hours provided to individuals who are DeafBlind: 2,277.00

Total number of SSP hours provided to individuals who are Deaf Plus: 1,343.25

Total number of SSP hours provided to older Deaf adults: 334.50

Total number of Case Management hours provided this time period: 320 Hours <sup>1</sup>

Total number of CM hours provided to individuals who are DeafBlind: 132.00

Total number of CM hours provided to individuals who are Deaf Plus: 88.00

Total number of SSP hours provided to older Deaf adults: 100.00

Additional analysis shows that:

- 11% of the case management support included intake, assessment, and service planning
- 11% of the case management support addressed housing issues
- 2% of the case management support was for coordinating services for consumers within COPD-NM
- 10% of the case management support was for coordinating services for consumers with other agencies
- 14% of the case management support addressed financial issues (not including Social Security Administration)
- 5% of the case management support addressed services and funding from the Social Security Administration
- 22% of the case management support assisted with medical and mental health concerns
- 1% of the case management support assisted with technology needs
- 4% of the case management support providing advocacy for other situations
- 20% of the case management support was for general coordination of services

Total number of trainings and workshops this time period: 2

	Region 1	0
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<sup>1</sup> COPD-NM was unable to fill the vacant case manager position during this contract year.

Total Trainings and Workshops by Region	Region 2	0
	Region 3	2
	Region 4	0
	Region 5	0

Total number of outreach events this time period: 4

Total outreach events/activities	Region 1	0
	Region 2	0
	Region 3	4
	Region 4	0
	Region 5	0



# LAS CRUCES SATELLITE OFFICE

## **Individual and Systematic Advocacy**

The Community Advocacy Specialist, Susana Santillan, has served a total of 106 consumers by providing individual, system advocacy and service coordination. With their advocacy efforts, 3,981 communication barriers were removed among our clients and public entities, including governmental and law enforcement agencies. She also did booths, presentations and provided information and referrals in southern New Mexico. Ms. Santillan worked with consumers and service providers from the city, county, state agencies, and businesses, such as ADA coordinators, Department of Health, New Mexico Workforce Connection Committees, courts, governmental and law enforcements agencies, medical faculties, nonprofit agencies, and private entities. She is able to utilize ASL and Spanish to assist the community in multiple languages thus providing a more holistic support to our Spanish speaking Hard of Hearing community.

## **Distribution of TEDP Applications:**

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

## **Education and Advocacy**

This fiscal year, a total of 103 booths were hosted by Ms. Santillan to educate Southern New Mexico communities about the NMCDHH contact information, resources, and services.

Ms. Santillan participated in many virtual meetings to network and outreach potential consumers. Some of these meetings are on a monthly on-going basis. She ensures the public is informed of the availability of the Commission's services and educates them on ADA laws pertaining to communication access.

Ms. Santillan collaborated with 133 agencies. She assisted 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.

## **Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2023**

Ms. Santillan worked with community members on several different cases.

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

- A Spanish speaking Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain an ASL Interpreter for her court hearing at a local district court. Ms. Santillan worked with the court representative to ensure trilingual interpretation was provided for the individual.

- A Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain an in-person ASL Interpreter for an appointment at a local specialty clinic. The clinic was providing VRI services to patients, however Ms. Santillan was able to explain to the clinic staff that VRI is not always an effective solution for all patients, and situations, and that technical issues, such as slow internet speeds, can negatively impact the VRI experience for all involved. This was the case with this particular individual, and Ms. Santillan provided the clinic with multiple fact sheets regarding ASL, and ASL interpreters. An in-person interpreter was successfully provided for the individuals appointment.
- A Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain an ASL Interpreter for job training at a Hotel in Las Cruces. Ms. Santillan contacted the Office Manager of the hotel regarding the individual's request. Ms. Santillan provided a summary of NMCDHH services, discussed ADA-effective Communication, and provided various fact sheets on the ADA, ASL, and ASL interpreting. Following this conversation, the hotel successfully provided an interpreter.
- A Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain an ASL Interpreter for an appointment at a specialty health clinic. Ms. Santillan spoke with the Office Manager regarding the request, their responsibilities under ADA Title III, and provided them with multiple fact sheets regarding ASL, and ASL interpreters. The Office Manager confirmed receipt of the information, and informed Ms. Santillan that an interpreter will be available for the appointment.
- A Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain an ASL Interpreter for their Naturalization Oath Ceremony. Ms. Santillan contacted the Supervisory Interpreter from the local US District Court to discuss the consumer's request and provided a copy of the Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony form to confirm the date and time of the event. The supervisory interpreter successfully scheduled an ASL interpreter for the ceremony.
- A Deaf individual requested advocacy assistance to obtain a ASL interpreter for an appointment at a local hiring event. Ms. Santillan contacted the person in charge of the hiring fair to request a sign language interpreter for the event, and discussed the ADA, specifically Title III, on effective communication. The event successfully obtained ASL interpreters to provide communication access.
- A Hard of Hearing senior citizen with additional disabilities requested advocacy assistance with communicating with a local water company and resolving a water leak and resulting bill situation. Ms. Santillan was able to advocate for the individual, and the situation was resolved successfully.

### **Systemic Advocacy Services**

Ms. Santillan participated in virtual and in-person meetings as appropriate, to continue her outreach efforts in Southern New Mexico. She assists members of our community who have questions regarding NMCDHH services, provides information regarding reducing communication barriers for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Community.

Ms. Santillan worked closely with New Mexico Workforce Connection and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Area 3 Southwest New Mexico by providing

systematic advocacy services for the Deaf community to obtain in person ASL Interpreters at local job fairs.

### **Ongoing**

Ms. Santillan serves on five committees for the fiscal year of 2023 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:

- (1) Behavioral Health Local Collaborative 3 Member
- (2) Behavioral Health Local Collaborative Policy & Advocacy State Committee
- (3) City of Las Cruces Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Committee/elected Secretary for FY2023-2024
- (4) NM Workforce Connection Disabilities Committee
- (5) NM Workforce Connection Disabilities Monitoring Committee

# 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 2023 our 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
- The Community Engagement Specialist position will hopefully be filled in early FY24 after being vacant for years due to limited funding.

## **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.
  - Serve on various subcommittees at the request of the Board.
- 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**

- Sharing information with our constituents through our online presence including:
  - Website: [www.CDHH.nm.gov](http://www.CDHH.nm.gov)
  - Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NMCDHH](http://www.facebook.com/NMCDHH)
  - Twitter: [www.twitter.com/NMCDHH](http://www.twitter.com/NMCDHH)
  - Instagram: [www.instagram.com/nmcdhh/](http://www.instagram.com/nmcdhh/)
  - YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/NMCDHH](http://www.youtube.com/user/NMCDHH)
  - LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/new-mexico-commission-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing-96710628](http://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**

- Coordinate 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>.

### **Human Resources**

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

### **Community Engagement Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2023**

- The NMCDHH website remained an information-sharing hub on a broad range of topics. Ms. Dignan and Mr. Trevor Brennan, the Administrative Operations Specialist, made frequent changes and improvements to the website using the content management system (CMS) implemented in 2021. These changes include redesigning pages for more intuitive access to information, repurposing space to emphasize prioritized information, and regularly adding new resources.
- All agency email addresses, and the agency website were changed from state.nm.us to cdhh.nm.gov domain names. This required sharing information with the community, working with the website hosting company to manage the migration, and changes to every agency Fact Sheet and publication. Thanks to advance planning and excellent organization, these changes were handled effectively and efficiently by Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan.
- 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 and information from other staff members from other departments on specialized topics.

- We shared a broad variety of information on social media and through the email newsletter in collaboration with Mr. Brennan. Information shared includes meetings and events, open captioned movies in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces, webinars, job postings, COVID-19 news, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 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 answer the questions or route them to the appropriate staff member. In FY23 there were 170 unique messages sent to the agency via email or the Ask the Expert form.
- Additionally, Mr. Brennan assisted many community members by phone. He received 382 unique phone calls in FY23.
- Our social media reach grew further in FY23. At the end of the fiscal year, NMCDHH had:
  - 1,724 followers on Facebook
  - 425 followers on Twitter
  - 180 followers on Instagram
  - 100 subscribers on YouTube
  - 214 connections on LinkedIn
  - 309 subscribers to the MailChimp email newsletter
- Except for the website, all of the platforms on which we engage the community are used at no cost to the agency.
- Budget challenges continued to complicate the provision of communication access services for agency staff and clients. Ms. Eubank and Ms. Dignan constantly analyzed projected interpreting needs and current Purchase Order balances, and Ms. Eubank assured that quality services are provided at the lowest possible cost. This sometimes includes providing interpreting services on days she is scheduled off, when last minute meetings would result in having to submit a request to a referral agency.
- Ms. Dignan had been using the free version of the platform Hootsuite to post to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter simultaneously. This efficiency has made it possible to post regularly while the Community Engagement Specialist position is still vacant. Hootsuite discontinued their free version, so Ms. Dignan researched alternatives and settled on the free version of Buffer. While there was a learning curve associated with creating a profile and linking all our social media accounts, the transition was smooth, and information was shared without interruption.
- The NMCDHH Library is available to constituents statewide. Library patrons may not physically enter the library to browse the collection, but individuals who contact us requesting to borrow materials may pick them up by appointment after viewing the catalog online. 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. Mr. Brennan adds new patrons to the library database when requested, bringing the current total to 110 registered users. In FY23, three patrons borrowed seven items from the collection.

- We share photos of our staff at various outreach events around the state. Constituents commented that it would be helpful to know where our staff would be in the future so they could meet with them at events, so we started promoting events at which we will have booths or presentations that are open to the public. 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. While this has created significantly more work for Mr. Brennan and Ms. Dignan, we are hopeful that it will encourage constituents to visit our staff at events. We are grateful to Susana Santillan, Dennis Stidham, and Jason Siergey for their assistance compiling the details for upcoming booths.
- We also started promoting our free presentations on social media. The first post resulted in three requests for presentations. We repurposed a section of the front page of the NMCDHH website to promote our Community Education presentations and to encourage constituents to invite us to have booths at their events. We worked with Corina Gutiérrez and Roger Robb to revise the Community Education page on the website to make it more readable ([www.cdhh.nm.gov/advocacy/community-education](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov/advocacy/community-education)).
- Ms. Dignan shares information with the interpreting community via an email distribution list. 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 over 200 interpreter subscribers.
- Community Engagement staff attended several remote trainings and workshops, and provided presentations for several groups:
  - Ms. Dignan and Ms. Eubank delivered professional development opportunities to 212 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 also provided training for the UNM SLIP students on Demand Control Schema and how to study for and take the Center for Assessment of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) Ethics and Cultural Responsiveness Exam and participated in UNM Seminar Panels providing feedback to members of the graduating class.
  - Ms. Dignan also provided training on New Mexico Mentoring and New Mexico Interpreter Licensure to the soon-to-be graduates of the El Paso Community College Interpreter Training Program.
  - Ms. Dignan participated in remote training sessions and meetings offered by the State Personnel Office (SPO), Zoom, the National Center for State Courts, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

- Ms. Eubank attended the virtual Mental Health Interpreter Training Institute, as well as countless Town Hall events hosted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and RID Board Meetings.
- Ms. Eubank worked collaboratively with the New Mexico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NMRID), Community Outreach Program of the Deaf (COPD) and Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to host a workshop for interpreters on interpreting for DeafBlind consumers which was well attended.
- Ms. Eubank also worked with NMRID and the New Mexico Shakespeare Festival (NMSF) to provide interpreting services for two free Shakespeare shows this summer. She served as a Shakespearean language expert and met with interpreters before their scheduled performances to assist in understanding some of the dense vocabulary used in the shows.

Ms. Dignan's accomplishments included:

- Running the Fall 2022 session of New Mexico Mentoring with all four mentor-mentee pairs from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Placitas, and Bosque Farms successfully completing the session. Sadly, the Spring 2023 session was cancelled due to lack of applications. When New Mexico Mentoring was created, it was the only opportunity of its kind in New Mexico. Now there are multiple mentoring, apprentice, and internship opportunities for interpreters to choose from, so this may be the beginning of a new pattern.
- Completing an astronomical amount of work related to The Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB) at the Regulation and Licensing Department (RLD).
  - RLD experienced a cyber-attack resulting in their entire system becoming inoperable and the loss of a significant amount of data. I worked with the Board Administrator, Justin Gonzales, to provide information to the interpreting community about a temporary system to handle license applications and renewals while simultaneously training a new Board Administrator, Phyllis Gilmore.
  - Assisted RLD with rebuilding lost records and the interpreter database.
  - Worked with the Rules Committee to complete another set of proposed rule changes that were accepted by the SLIPB and are being implemented.
  - RLD is implementing a new fully online system for applications and renewals. I have worked with the interpreting community to gather information to prepare for that transition and with RLD staff to load our requirements into the new platform. We should be migrated to the system in early FY24.
  - The Governor's conclusion of the Public Health Emergency on March 31, 2023 triggered extensions that have been granted to interpreters with Provisional Licenses who were unable to take certification exams due to a variety of pandemic-related closures and delays. Interpreters with extensions have 36 months from the end of the Public Health Emergency to qualify for an Educational or Community License.
  - All RLD websites were completely redesigned, and the changes were rolled out without warning. Ms. Gilmore and I hurried to evaluate the revised site



and provide documentation to the website department to replace crucial missing information.

- Due to ongoing staffing shortages at RLD, license renewals were delayed. I communicated with many individuals who were concerned about the status of their licenses and helped them navigate the process.
- The volume of questions about New Mexico Licensure requirements and processes has increased exponentially. I assure that questions are answered timely and accurately.
- I completed my 10<sup>th</sup> year of service to the Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities and attended my second meeting as a member of the El Paso Community College Interpreter Training Program Advisory Board.
- Several entities requested assistance regarding improvement of communication access, information sharing, and with licensure requirements, including:
  - ACES Technical Charter School
  - Adult Protective Services
  - Albuquerque Community Foundation
  - Amy Biehl High School
  - Arizona Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - Arizona Schools for the Deaf and Blind
  - Autism Learning Collaborative
  - Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD)
  - City of El Paso
  - Clovis Community College
  - Farmington School District
  - Hobbs Schools
  - Interpreter referral agencies and staffing agencies
  - Las Cruces Public Schools
  - Museum of International Folk Art
  - Musical Theatre Southwest
  - New Mexico Community AIDS Partnership
  - New Mexico Department of Transportation
  - New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - New Mexico Employee Benefit Bureau
  - New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
  - New Mexico Workers Compensation Administration
  - San Juan College
  - Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board Staff
  - United Way
  - Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

Ms. Eubank's accomplishments included many activities that further support the agency and the interpreting community, and that involved systemic changes within the field of interpreting:

- The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) released a digital credentialing system through a third party called Credly. The digital credentials replaced the

previous system of physical and electronic RID membership cards for all interpreters by providing a digital badge which can be verified in real time. Unfortunately, the interpreting community was not informed of this change in advance, which caused a great deal of confusion and concern amongst stakeholders. Ms. Eubank devoted a significant amount of time helping to clarify the confusion and abate concerns amid the sudden shift. Using information gleaned from multiple sources, Ms. Eubank created two fact sheets for the website on the shift to digital credentials and how to share them with the licensing board, hiring entities, and community members.

- Aiding interpreters in navigating the new exams for certification offered by the CASLI. This included providing resources to study for the new exams and clarification on how changes at the national level are impacting local licensure for interpreters.
- Ms. Eubank is currently serving as the President of NMRID, the local affiliate chapter of RID. NMRID welcomed a new board and began work on establishing goals for professional development and support for New Mexico interpreters. In this process Ms. Eubank has received feedback on areas that NMRID and NMCDHH can partner to provide education and support to interpreters and stakeholders statewide.
- Ms. Eubank created a partnership with the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) that will greatly benefit our apprentice interpreters. CCHI is a professional organization for interpreters of any language (spoken or signed) who work in healthcare settings. While NMCDHH does not work in healthcare settings in the same way as CCHI, the CCHI Commissioners are dedicated to advancing the interpreting profession as a whole and have been working with Ms. Eubank to create professional development opportunities for the NMCDHH apprentice interpreters.
- In addition to proctoring an Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Written Exam for one individual, Ms. Eubank partnered with the University of New Mexico Language Learning Center to proctor a large group session of the exam. The Language Learning Center has a computer lab with several stations that allowed many tests to be proctored simultaneously. As a result, Ms. Eubank was able to host 9 testing candidates, all of whom are now eligible to apply for their New Mexico Educational Interpreter License.
- Collaborated with the El Paso Community College Interpreter Training Program Director, Jennifer Dahlgren, to team interpret with students to provide services for assignments in southern New Mexico. Ms. Eubank and the Deaf staff were able to provide these students with feedback and support on their interpreting skills, and the students did an excellent job providing communication access.
- Met with pre-certified interpreters on a one-on-one basis to discuss testing options and strategies to navigate the CASLI exam transition.
- Ms. Eubank coordinated 634 hours of interpreting services for the agency. Only 13 of those hours were provided by interpreter referral agencies, with the rest being provided by staff or direct contractors, resulting in a significant cost savings.

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

- Working with the two new FY23 Apprentice Interpreters to provide a virtual welcome day and orientation session that included meeting agency staff. Ms.

Eubank followed with one one-on-one mentor meetings with each apprentice to provide interpreting baseline samples and discuss goals for the year.

- Throughout the year, the apprentices engaged in a variety of professional development activities. They began with observation of Ms. Eubank and other interpreters, and they provided samples of interpreting work and collaborated to provide feedback, tips, and encouragement to one another as part of their skill development. They later transitioned to being observed by Ms. Eubank as they interpreted for NMCDHH staff. They worked on building specific interpreting skills and building their professional portfolios, which included training and conversations about setting up both agency and independent contracts, creating resumes, and professionally engaging with clients who are unfamiliar with what the provision of interpreting services entails.
- Ms. Eubank met with the apprentices in reflective practice sessions that allowed the apprentices to talk about challenging ethical decisions they have made in their work and to discuss best practices.
- Both apprentices accepted leadership roles within NMRID. This allowed them to begin making professional connections and to invest their time and skills in supporting our local interpreting community.
- Ms. Eubank coordinated several professional development workshops for the Apprentices, many in collaboration with other NMCDHH staff members.
- As part of the partnership with CCHI, our apprentice interpreters were invited to interpret the CCHI New Credential Launch Summit. This was a fantastic opportunity for our apprentices to work in a challenging environment and put into practice the skills they are currently honing. CCHI also recorded the summit and provided the link to our apprentices so that they could do a post-assignment strengths/areas for improvement assessment on their work. Additionally, CCHI provided more videos that our apprentices can use for further practice.
- Our apprentices were able to meet with staff from the Community Advocacy Department to ask questions on how to interpret for sensitive vocabulary and subjects. Typically, new interpreters have a hard time learning the vocabulary to interpret for subjects that could be considered taboo, so having a safe space to meet with our Deaf staff and ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking just anyone was incredibly beneficial.
- Ms. Eubank held a workshop on how to set up independent contracts for work outside of interpreting agencies. This workshop was open to current apprentices as well as recent graduates of the UNM SLIP.
- Both apprentices participated in the New Mexico Shakespeare Festival-NMRID joint project and interpreted a Shakespeare show. They did fantastic work with very complex language and the Festival was a hit thanks to their efforts.
- Both FY 23 apprentices successfully completed their year in the Apprentice Interpreter Program and will continue to work with NMCDHH as contract interpreters.
- Apprentices engaged in 118 hours of observation, interpreting, and professional development work in the fiscal year with a higher number of in-person assignments.

- Ms. Eubank coordinated the application and interview process for FY 24 apprentices. Two individuals were offered and accepted positions within the program that will start at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

### **Human Resources Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2023**

In addition to program work, Lisa Dignan is the Director of Human Resources (HR) for the agency. Accomplishments in this area included:

- Continually revised policies and procedures related to COVID-19 with the Executive Director. The *COVID-19 Mitigation Self-Screening and Reporting Policy and Procedure* is created, revised, and distributed by SPO. Each agency is required to personalize the policy to reflect agency name, structure, and leadership then adopt it. The *NMCDHH COVID Safe Office Policy and Procedures* is the agency's internal policy for staff working in the office. Revisions were made to maintain alignment with SPO's policy and with the Governor's Executive Orders. Both policies are designed to assure maximum safety for staff and clients.
- Maintained all records related to COVID-19 such as client screening forms, vaccination records, and test results where required, and made all entries into SHARE.
- Completed several personnel actions to most efficiently use our Full Time Employees (FTEs) to serve our constituents.
- Processed the resignation of our Business Operations Specialist who accepted a position with another state agency.
- Posted the vacant Financial Services Specialist position, conducted interviews, and onboarded the new employee. Unfortunately that employee left a short time later, so their resignation was processed.
- Shared information with NMCDHH staff regarding the annual Open Enrollment period for employee benefits and coordinated with the Employee Benefits Bureau to provide interpreters for benefit webinars.
- Revised the NMCDHH Employee Handbook to implement rule changes made by the State Personnel Board and SPO, including the rescission of the Statewide Non-Mandatory Telework Policy.
- Continued "Employee Handbook Minute" weekly emails to agency staff to provide reminders about HR Policies and Procedures and to notify staff of any changes from SPO or in agency policies.
- The New Mexico Legislature authorized 6% pay increases for all state employees to be effective in July 2023 and I completed all of the preparation necessary for those increases to be applied.
- To be eligible for the FY24 pay increases, all employees needed a completed satisfactory evaluation entered in the state SHARE system prior to June 30, 2023. I successfully worked with the Management Team to assure that all evaluations were entered timely.
- Completed scanning all existing personnel files so that digital access is available for them. Progress organizing those files continues.

- Coordinated successful completion of the mandatory annual Civil Rights Training by all staff members by the June deadline.
- Regularly attended remote meetings of the Human Resources Council while it was active, the State Personnel Board, Trainers Unite, and Recruiters Unite meetings.
- Attended several training webinars hosted by SPO, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Department of Finance Administration (DFA) Payroll Bureau, Employee Benefit Bureau (EBB), and the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA).
- Attended ADA webinars provided by the Southwest ADA Center and other entities.

*FY23  
Apprentices*



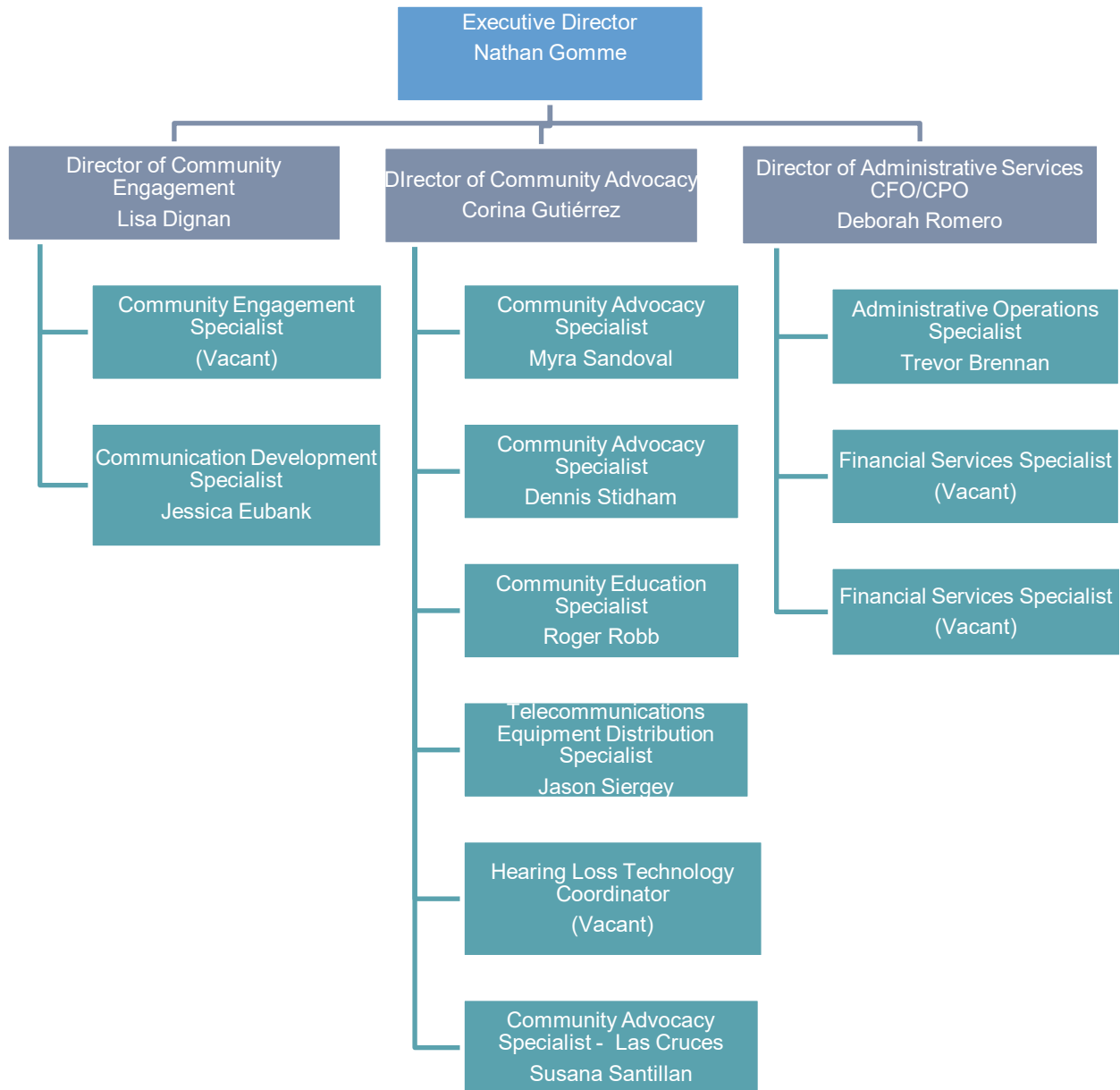
RHONDA HALL

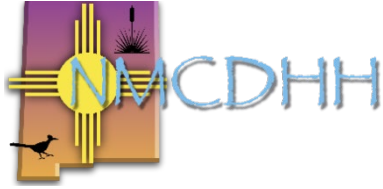


KAELIN TONREY

# NMCDHH Organizational Chart

as of June 30, 2023





## 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 contracts 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. She is a member or Chair of several committees working to improve language access. Lisa has served as the Interim Executive Director of NMCDHH on two separate occasions. Lisa 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 25 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. Corina joined NMCDHH in August of 2007. She plans, advocates and coordinates services to meet her consumer’s 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 21 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.



## *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.

## *Hector Lopez, Financial Operations Specialist*



Hector Lopez is the Financial Operations Specialist for NMCDHH. He has over 12 years of experience in state government. Hector started as an Office and Administrative Support at the Department of Information Technology. He became a Financial Specialist for Children, Youth and Family Department and later for the New Mexico Gaming Control Board. He has an Associate's Degree in Office Technology and is bilingual Spanish and English. Hector left the Commission in September 2022.

## *Trevor Brennan, Administrative Operations 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 is currently pursuing his second degree in Computer Information Systems. Trevor 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 previously worked at NMSD as an administrative assistant and teacher's aide. He 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.

### *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



### *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.

## *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

## *Concha Dunwell, Chair – Deaf or Hard of Hearing Professional (July 2022-January 2023)*

Concha Dunwell is a lifelong resident of Las Cruces, New Mexico. She recently retired from Las Cruces Public School District after 20 years working in various positions within their special education department. She has served on the New Mexico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Board and Hearing Loss Association of America, Las Cruces Chapter Steering Committee. Mrs. Dunwell teaches American Sign Language at New Mexico State University and after many years of working with the Lions Camp for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, was named Director in January 2016. Mrs. Dunwell was awarded the Melvin Jones Fellow Award from the Lions Club International Foundation for her humanitarian efforts and is the first woman to receive the award. Currently, she is working in different capacities all related to deafness. She continues to maintain involvement with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities in the southern part of the state and has formed many friendships.



## *Francis Vigil, Secretary– Parent of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child(July 2022-March 2023)*



Francis Vigil was not born in New Mexico but has been raised in New Mexico nearly his entire life. He is from the Pueblo of Zia and is also Jemez Pueblo and Jicarilla Apache. Mr. Vigil has served as an educator in New Mexico his entire educational career. Mr. Vigil started his educational career as a high school science teacher, and has served as a school, district, state, and federal level administrator throughout New Mexico. Mr. Vigil is currently the Education Specialist for Native Language, History, and Culture for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). In his current work, he works to implement culturally and linguistically responsive methods across the BIE's twenty-three Bureau

Operated Schools, in 8 states. In addition, Mr. Vigil has done consulting work with several schools, school districts, and community-based education entities within New Mexico in the areas of culturally and linguistically responsive education. He also serves as a board member for Parents as Teachers, which is an international and national early childhood education and home visiting provider.

Mr. Vigil holds a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology from New Mexico State University (Go Aggies!), a Master of Arts in Secondary Education from the University of New Mexico and is currently pursuing a PhD in Social Justice at Arizona State University.

Mr. Vigil and his wife Stella, have a blended family, and they are parents to a total of seven children. Of the seven children, two are Deaf, Bria and Soniya Vigil. It is through them that Mr. Vigil has had the honor of becoming an advocate and community member for and with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in New Mexico. Mr. Vigil has been engaged with New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) Albuquerque Pre-school and Santa Fe campuses as a parent since 2006. Mr. Vigil has been involved in NMSD school and community advocacy and events. He has worked with NMSD on creating understanding for culturally responsive education. He has provided training and support to sign language interpreters in the area of cultural competency. He, and his daughter Bria, had the honor of presenting at the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Conference about the need for cultural understanding for sign language interpreters. Now that his daughters are in middle and high school, he can be seen cheering on the NMSD Roadrunners wherever they are playing!

### *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.

## *Ronald J. Stern – President of New Mexico Association for the Deaf (July 2022-December 2022)*



Dr. Ronald J. Stern is now retired after several stops in California, New Mexico, New York and Washington, D.C. with over 40+ years in the field of education of the Deaf.

Concerning New Mexico, he served as the Superintendent of the New Mexico School for the Deaf for 15 years (2000-2015). Over the duration of his professional career and to this day, he continues to be actively engaged in advocating for the deaf community which has included a range of roles in various local, state, and national professional and community organizations.

Dr. Stern holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., a Master of Arts degree in special education with an emphasis on education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing from California State University, Northridge, and a doctorate on educational leadership from the University of New Mexico. He and his wife, Hedy, reside in Santa Fe as proud parents of 3 Deaf children who in turn have blessed them with 4 grandchildren.

## *Mr. John Hooper – 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 Associates 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).



## *Meena Mann – President of New Mexico Association for the Deaf (January 2023-Present)*



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.







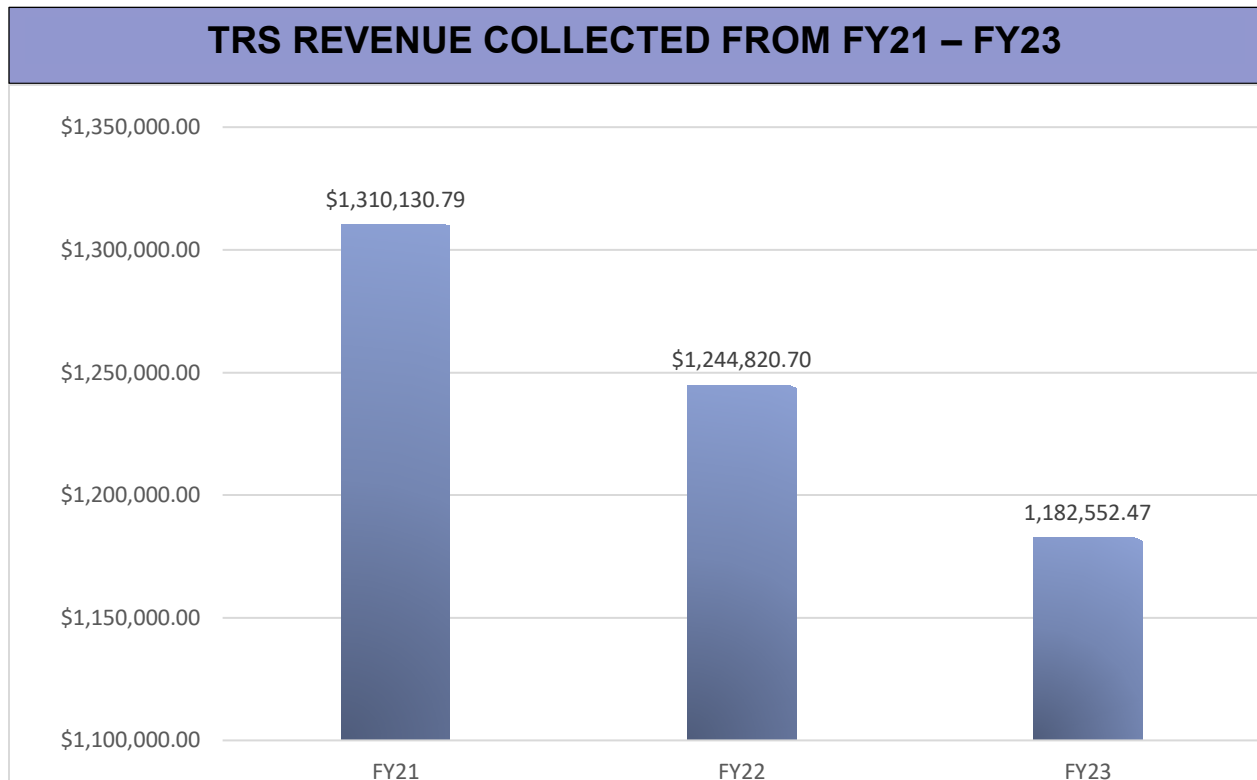
# Budget

## FY23 NM Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Annual Report

Category	2023 Budget	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining Budget	% Expended
200 PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,213,700.00	974,167.23		239,532.77	80.26%
300 CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	1,229,300.00	699,704.63		529,595.37	56.92%
400 OTHER	282,100.00	213,346.00		68,754.00	75.63%
500 OTHER FINANCING USES	116,500.00	116,500.00		0.00	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,841,600</b>	<b>2,003,717.86</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>837,882.14</b>	<b>70.51%</b>

FY23 Revenue	
General Fund Allotment	TRS Revenue
\$1,286,200.00	\$1,182,552.47

The graph below represents the revenue collected from the TR fund from 2021-2023  
The TRS revenue continues to decline

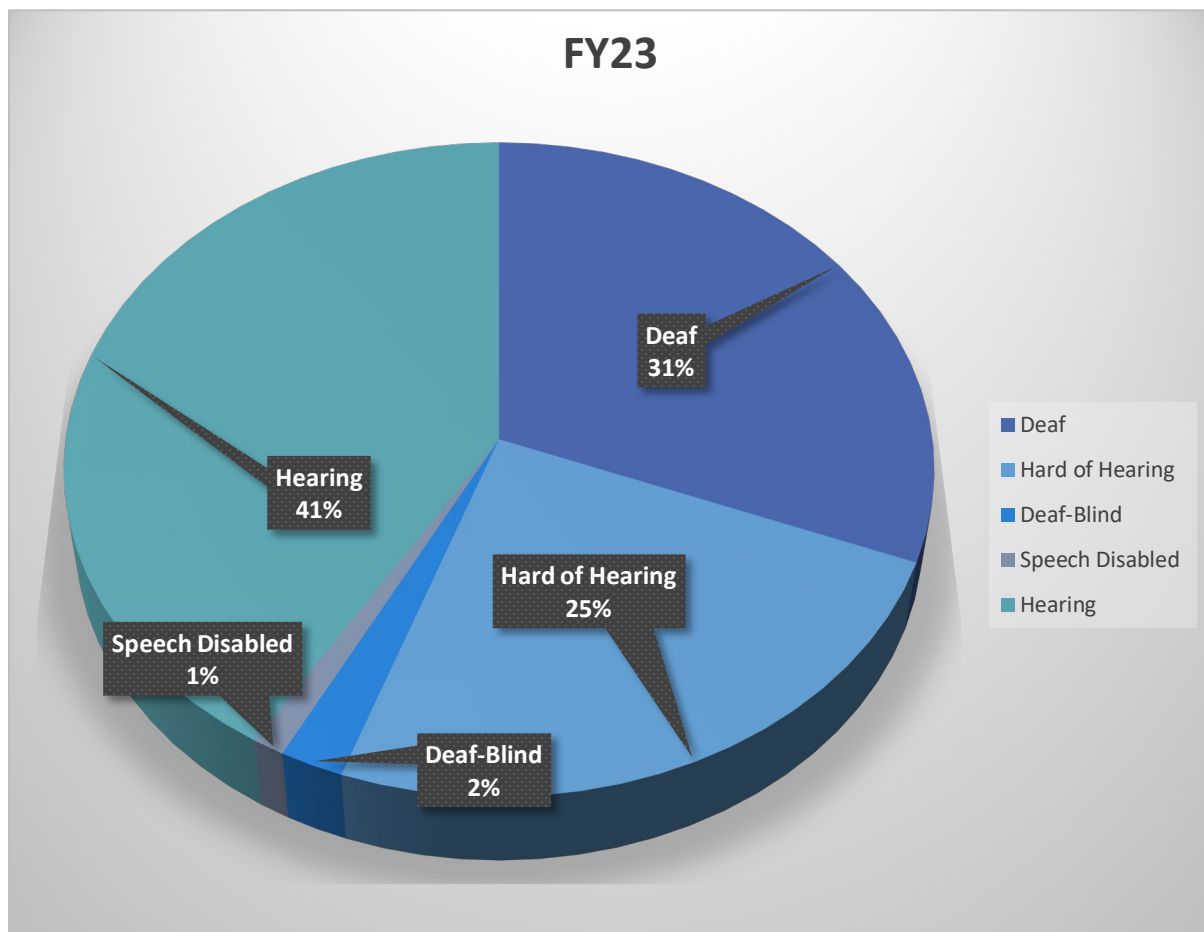






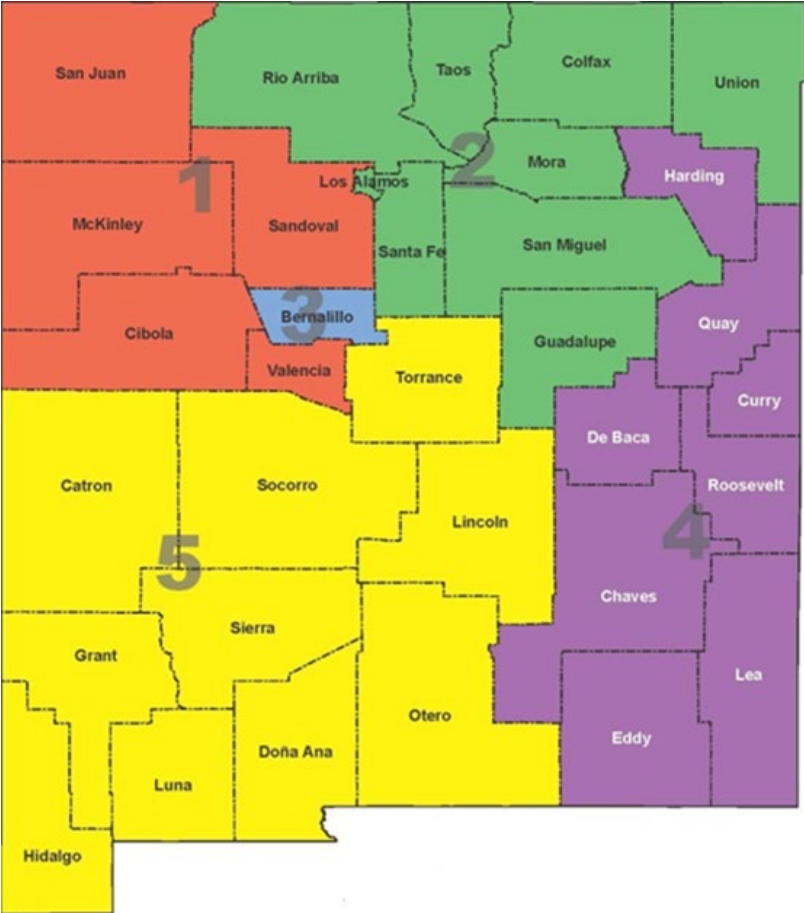
## Community Member Statistics

### Community Members by Self-Identified Disability



NMCDHH Served 455 Individuals in FY23

# Community Members by Region



**Region 1 – 28**  
**Region 2 – 51**  
**Region 3 – 224**  
**Region 4 – 24**  
**Region 5 – 128**



## Contact Information

### *Albuquerque Office*

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Suite 1550  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

### *Phone Numbers*

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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*

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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**

