



IDHHC Director's Stakeholders Advisory Group
August 18, 2025, Meeting Summary

IDHHC Staff Present:

Benro T. Olives, Director; Will Lee, Interpreter Coordinator; and Tonia R. Bogener, Legal Counsel.

SAG Members Present:

Dawn Andell, ISBE Educator, St. Clair County; **Shelley Engstrom-Kestel**, Moraine Valley Community College / Illinois Board of Interpreters; **Holly Gaydurgis**, College of DuPage; **Teri Hedding**, Moraine Valley Community College; **Hershel Jackson**, Statewide Deaf Services Advocates; **Katiewu Thomas**, Waubonsee Community College; **Dawn Milka**, Illinois Supervisors of Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals; **Dennis O'Brien**, IDHHC; **Susan Sanders**, Illinois Central College; **Julia Speakman**, IDHS, Division on Behavioral Health & Recovery; and **Tristan Wright**, Illinois Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

Public Attendees: 0

Director Olives reminded everyone if they are unable to access Teams group to please reach out via email. To email everyone, you must list the individual email addresses. It's important for all members to give feedback to the various recommendations being submitted for consideration.

Interpreter Training Programs:

Reminded everyone they should be giving feedback to the list of recommendations. Reviewed the list of recommendations along with whether they should be short- or long-term goals. Concerns were expressed whether this really addresses the issues. Some of the recommendations mitigate immediate concerns but fail to resolve the underlying challenges.

Members indicated feedback from IDHHC would be helpful to clarify what is within its authority to take action.

Stakeholder Recommendations & Data Collection:

Director Olives reviewed the updated the National ASL Interpreter Income Study and provided the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Needs Assessment. Members asked if it was possible to hire consultant to have report specific to Illinois.

Questions / Open Discussion:

There are ongoing concerns for introducing ASL in High Schools. Many districts refuse to explore alternatives to having anyone other than a licensed K-12 teacher for ASL classes. It was discussed ISBE recent Advisory Group discussed this very issue and talked about providing alternative pathways to allow Deaf ASL instructors.

It would be beneficial to find out which high schools are offering ASL classes and the teachers available. There are opportunities being missed that ISBE could have a license teacher partner with instructors in the ITPs. The lack of ASL classes which can qualify for foreign language credit is a barrier to kids actively wanting to pursue an interpreting profession.

Next Meeting: August 25, 2025 @ 3:00 PM