



State of Illinois
Illinois Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission



Annual Report 2023

Fiscal Year July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023



Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

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To Governor Pritzker and the People of Illinois:

On behalf of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission, I am pleased to submit the 2023 Annual Report for the Commission activities during the fiscal year from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. Governed by eleven (11) Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor's Office, the Commission promotes education and awareness of the legal requirements for effective communication, and advocates to improve communication access for all programs and services utilized by Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals. Additionally, Commission serves as the regulatory body responsible for licensing sign language interpreters pursuant to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

At the beginning of Fiscal Year 2023, the Commission staff returned to the office full-time (ending remote hybrid schedule). The Commission undertook the expansion of its existing conference room and adding video conferencing ability. This allowed the Commission to safely transitioned back to hosting in-person public meetings of both the Commissioners and Illinois Board of Interpreters. Additionally, the Commission resumed proctoring the IL Board for Evaluation of Interpreters certification testing.

With new vigor, Commission staff worked to undertake new collaborations with stakeholders to eliminate barriers illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), the Commission updated its website to a new platform making it more user friendly and increasing access to information, forms, and resources. I encourage you to visit our new-look website.

I hope you find this annual report full of useful and important information, showcasing the Commission's notable accomplishments and statistics. Once again, the Commission looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the state agencies as well as partnerships with the stakeholders to identify, address and remove systemic and isolation barriers for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind people in the state of Illinois.

Respectfully submitted,

Benro Ogunyipe, Director

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THE COMMISSION

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) is an executive state agency that advocates on behalf of the interests of persons in Illinois who are deaf or hard of hearing.

COMMISSIONERS

The Commission is governed by eleven (11) Commissioners. The Commissioners are appointed by the Governor's Office and represent different geographical areas of Illinois.

Dennis O'Brien (Chairperson)	–	Wheaton, IL
Tyrone Barnes	–	Grayslake, IL
Jean Draths	–	Glenview, IL
Michael Dubowe	–	Normal, IL
David Frazier	–	University Park, IL
John R. Jun	–	Minooka, IL
Lori Krakora (Vice Chairperson)	–	Naperville, IL
Joshua D. Sevier	–	Chicago, IL
Jennifer Sender	–	Chicago, IL
Kevin Smith	–	Berwyn, IL

STAFF

The Commission is operated by a team of dedicated staff members.

Benro Ogunyipe	–	Director
Tonia Bogener	–	Legal Counsel
Dana Craig	–	Program Coordinator
Patty Greene	–	Personnel Manager
Lee Taylor	–	Office Assistant
Vacant	–	Interpreter Coordinator

INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF PROGRAM

The Commission oversees the Interpreter for the Deaf Program which licenses Sign Language Interpreters and the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification testing in accordance with the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Illinois Board of Interpreters acts as an advisory Board providing recommendations to the Commission Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The fiscal year statistics related to sign language interpreter licensing and BEI Certification is reported on pages 9 – 11.



Mission Statement

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission shall promote system change, community education and collaboration to advance effective communication access for all individuals with hearing loss in Illinois.

Objectives

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) promotes education and awareness about hearing loss and the legal requirements for effective communication on behalf of people with hearing loss in Illinois.

The Commission strives to promote independence for individuals with hearing loss by providing technical assistance and training to enhance public and private programs, and by making legislative and policy recommendations to assure accessibility.

The Commission provides statewide resources to assist the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind community in Illinois. The Commission also regulates licensure for sign language interpreters and maintain an online directory of all licensed Illinois sign language interpreters.

Core Functions

- Promote independence for individuals with a hearing loss
- Increase quality and number of sign language interpreters
- Provide educational awareness regarding hearing loss
- Provide statewide resources

Vision Statement

All Illinois residents with a hearing loss will enjoy the benefits of a fully accessible society enabling each person to participate in and contribute to all aspects of life.

History

In 1995, various leaders in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community started discussing the desire for a governmental body to focus on the needs of individuals with hearing loss. This group developed into a Task Force to lobby for the formation of a new state agency.

The Governor issued an amendatory veto to legislation establishing Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) as a state agency and changed it to an advisory committee under the Department of Human Services. Based on the outcry of Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, the House and Senate both overrode the Governor's veto. IDHHC was officially established on January 1, 1997, and opened its office in November 1998, when the first Director was hired.

PROGRAM & OPERATIONS

Statewide Services, Resources, and Information

The Commission provides statewide services, resources, and information about communication access of services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals. During the Fiscal Year 2023, the Commission responded to over 24,000 public inquiries from a variety of individuals and public and private entities relating to communication access, sign language interpreters, financial assistance for hearing aids, assistive technology, advocacy organizations, centers on independent living, filing discrimination complaints, educational options, telecommunication equipment, and DHS Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

Community Outreach & Collaboration

To increase visibility and awareness of the Commission's programs, the Commission continues to increase its outreach and collaboration efforts. Fiscal Year 2023 highlights include: 988 Key Stakeholders Coalition, ADA Project Steering Committee, Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities, Illinois State Board of Education Statewide Special Education Directors' Conference, Institute for Parents of Preschool Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Informational Fair and Illinois Association of the Deaf Biennial Conference. The Commission met with the Statewide Center for Independent Livings Deaf Service Coordinators (SW-DSC) for an opportunity to discuss and find out the critical issues from DSCs who provide direct services and support to Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing persons.

Technical Assistance, Consultation, & Training Support

The Commission provides technical assistance, consultation, and training support to improve access to public and private programs and services for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. In Fiscal Year 2023, the Commission continued its collaboration with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health on ensuring effective communication for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals when using the new 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline which is a network of crisis centers; and with the Illinois Department of Public Health on developing and reviewing the existing educational materials and documents to be culturally and linguistically appropriated for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind.

413

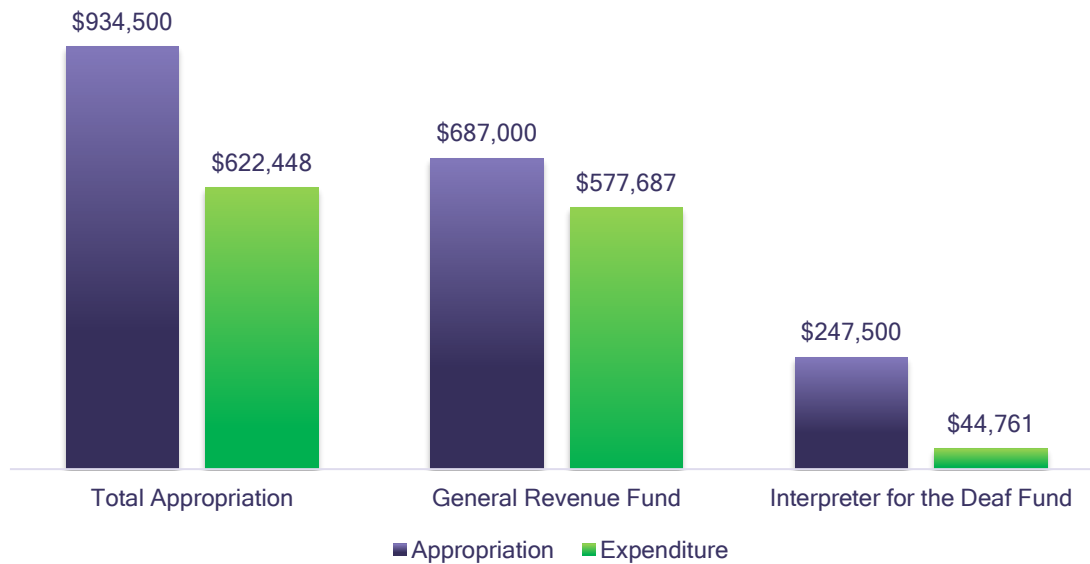
Communication Visor Cards

The Commission distributed 413 communication visor cards to state, local, and municipal law enforcement agencies in Illinois. The communication visor cards are a tool to aid in communication access when a law enforcement officer interacts with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals during traffic stops or road-side assistance.

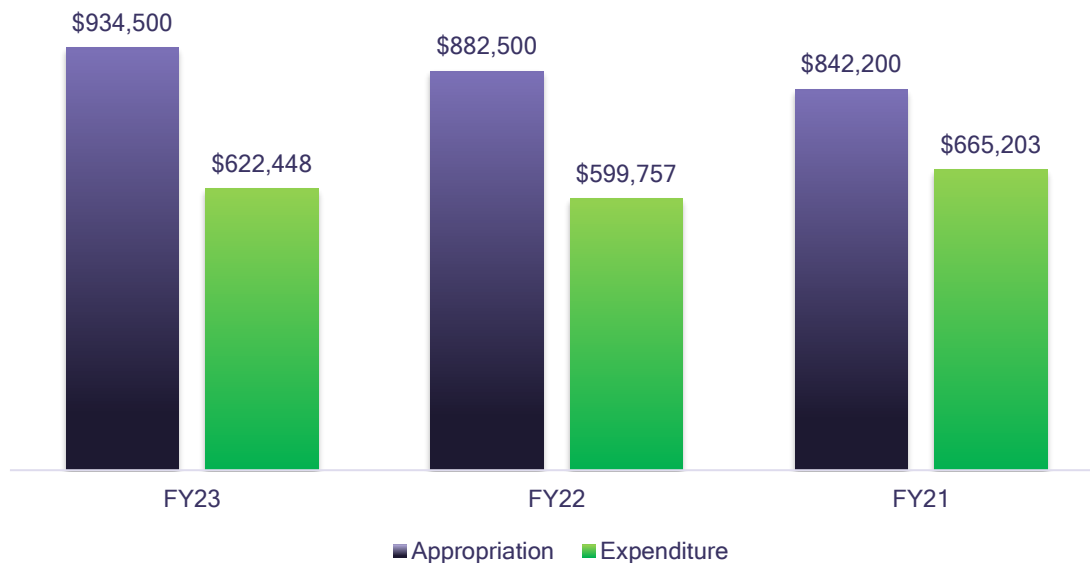
COMMISSION BUDGET

\$934,500

Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriation & Expenditure



Historical Appropriation & Expenditure



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

	FY23	FY22	FY21
Public Inquiries	24,097	16,146	17,168
Educational and Informational Materials Distributed	17,414	15,728	17,945
Interpreters Participated in IDHHC Sponsored or Hosted Professional Development Opportunities	610	252	109
Communication Visor Cards Distributed	413	1360	1214
Subscribers to IDHHC Electronic Mail Communications	739	715	732

17,414

Number of Educational Information and Materials Distributed

Legislative Bills & Resolutions

During the legislative session, thousands of bills and resolutions were introduced in the areas of government, education, regulation, human needs, health and safety, agriculture and conversation, transportation, rights and remedies, and business and employment. The Commission monitors legislation impacting the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities in Illinois. For informational purposes, a list of relevant bills and resolutions are available on the Commission's website. During the Fiscal Year 2023, new legislation was enacted for insurance coverage of hearing aids and updates to allow the purchase of over-the-counter hearing aids in accordance with Food and Drug Administration and Federal trade Commission regulations.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

The Commission is responsible for the administration of the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007 requiring sign language interpreters to be licensed when providing interpreting services and proctors the Illinois Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification test. Additionally, the Commission investigates allegations of violations of the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act. In cases of substantiated allegations, various voluntary corrective measures are used including imposition of discipline when appropriate. An online directory of all licensed interpreters by proficiency levels, geographic regions, counties, and contact information is available on the Commission's website to assist entities in hiring sign language interpreters to provide interpreting services.

ILLINOIS BOARD OF INTERPRETERS

The Illinois Board of Interpreters consists of seven (7) members appointed by the Commission Director. The Board is composed of four (4) licensed interpreters for the deaf and three (3) deaf or hard of hearing consumers and the IDHHC Interpreter Coordinator. The Board provides recommendations to the Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

Laura Braucht (Chairperson)	–	Joy, IL
Hershella Ashford	–	Chicago, IL
Kimberly Berger (Vice Chairperson)	–	Murphysboro, IL
Ayanna Dowd	–	Homewood, IL
Teri Hedding	–	Palos Hills, IL
Amy Miller	–	Glen Carbon, IL
Barbara Pawlica (Secretary)	–	North Riverside, IL

610

Number of Interpreters Participated in the Commission Sponsored Professional Development Opportunities

2023 Professional Interpreter Development Opportunities

The Commission hosted its summer online professional development opportunities and BEI Preparation Workshops for Illinois Interpreters. A total of 19 Professional Development and 5 BEI Certification Preparation Workshops were offered from diverse Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Presenters and Trainers.

2023 Professional Interpreter Development Workshops

610

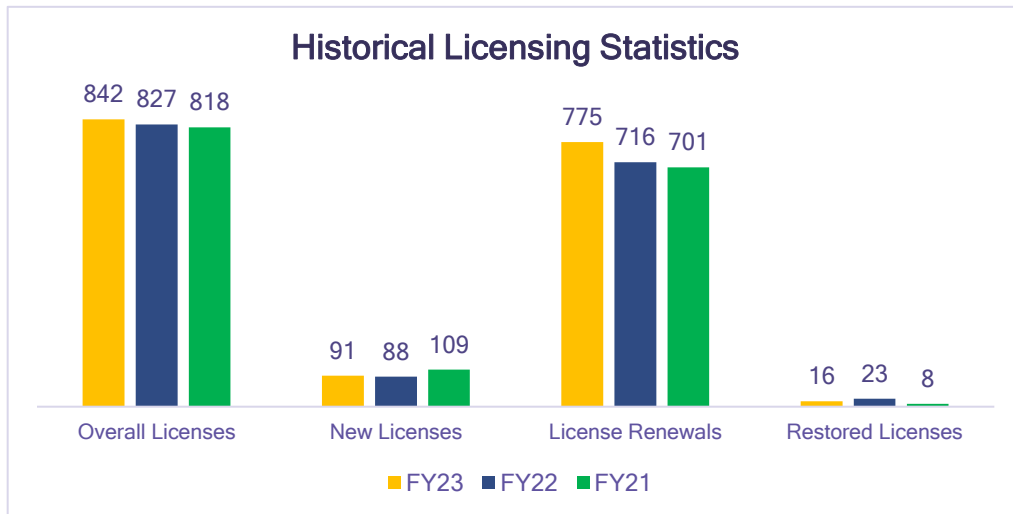
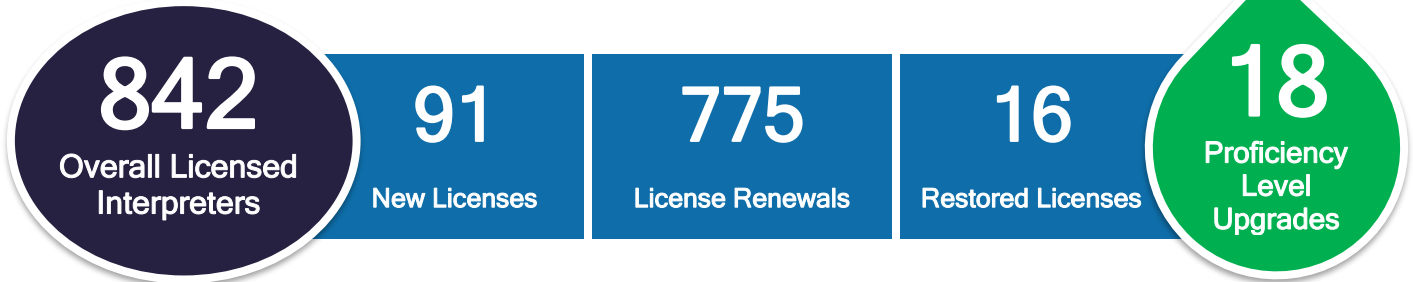
Total Attendees

107.5
CE Hours Offered

Illinois Interpreter Licensing & BEI Certification

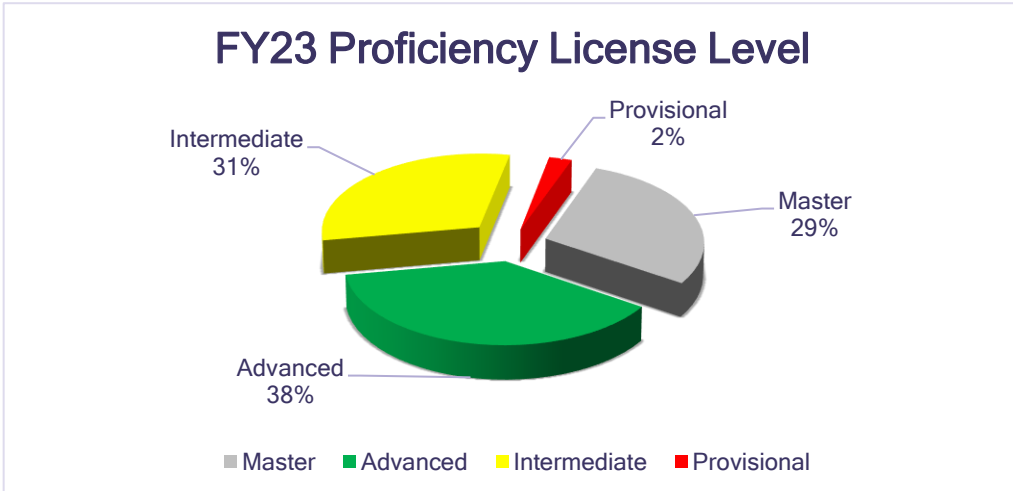
	FY23	FY22	FY21
Total Licensing & BEI Applications	1249	1163	1104

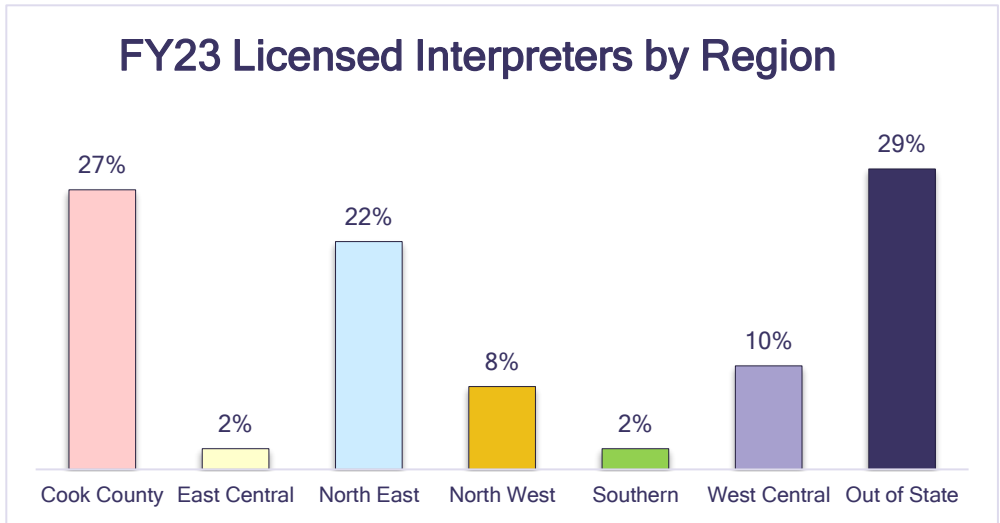
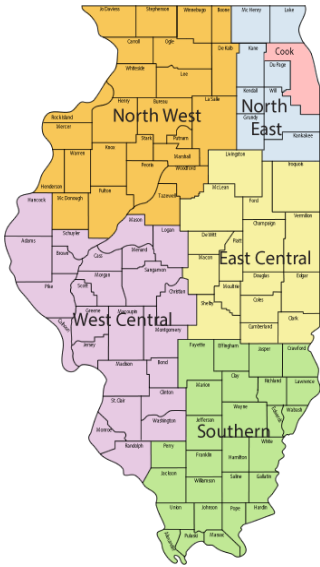
Illinois Interpreter Licensing Statistics



What's New?

The Illinois BEI Certification testing reopened fully for both written and performance testing. The Short-Term Conditional License is no longer granted after the emergency rules expired in October 2021.

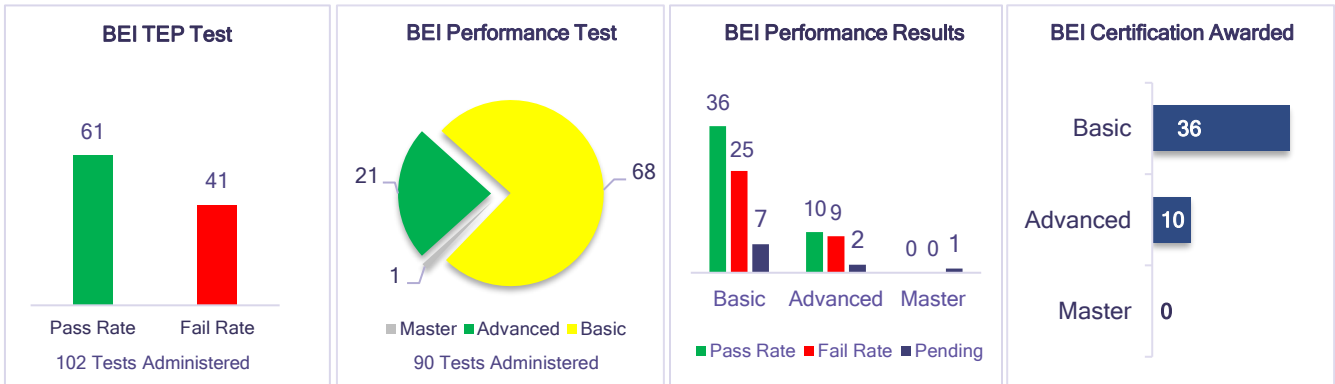




Illinois Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Testing Statistics

		FY23		FY22		FY21	
BEI Written TEP & Performance Tests Administered		192		145		No BEI Tests Administered Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.	
Test of English Proficiency	Performance Test	102	90	76	69	0	0

BEI Tests Results & Certification Statistics



Illinois Interpreter Training & Interpreter Preparation Programs

College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn
Columbia College Chicago, Chicago
Illinois Central College¹, East Peoria
John A. Logan College, Carterville
Quincy University², Quincy
William Rainey Harper College², Palatine

Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills
Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville
Waubensee Community College², Aurora
MacMurray College², Jacksonville
Richland Community College², Decatur

¹Program Is Fully Online

²Program Suspended or Closed



Electronic Publication available at www.idhhc.illinois.gov

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