



State of Illinois
Illinois Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission



Five-Year Strategic Plan & Priorities

July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2029

Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

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Introduction

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. In addition to the Director and staff, the Commission is governed by eleven (11) Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor's Office and represent different geographical areas of Illinois. At least six (6) Commissioners must be Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind. The Commission holds quarterly meetings each year. All meetings are open to the public.

The Commission is the regulatory body of the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Illinois Board of Interpreters, as established by the statute and within the Commission, provides recommendations to the Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. 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 Commission Interpreter Coordinator.

Background & 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 Task Force intended for IDHHC to:

1. Be a state agency;
2. Interact with state agencies, Governor and General Assembly;
3. Provide training, education and consultation;
4. Provide Information and referral;
5. Remove communication barriers and improving accessibility;
6. Establish interpreter standards, evaluation and certification; and
7. Not be involved in the provision of direct services.

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.

Statutory Mandates

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission has eight (8) statutory mandates as established by the state legislature under the Act, (20 ILCS 3932/) Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission Act.

The Commission shall be a coordinating and advocating body that acts on behalf of the interests of persons in Illinois who are deaf or hard of hearing, including children, adults, senior citizens, and those with any additional disability.

1. Make available and provide an educational and informational program through printed materials, workshop and training sessions, presentations, demonstrations, and public awareness events about hearing loss for citizens in Illinois and for public and private entities. The program shall include, but not be limited to, information concerning information and referral services, lending libraries, service and resource availability, the interpreter registry, accessibility and accommodation issues, assistive technology, empowerment issues, obligations of service providers and employers, educational options, and current federal and State statutes, regulations, and policies regarding hearing loss.
2. Cooperate with public and private agencies and local, State, and federal governments to coordinate programs for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
3. Provide technical assistance, consultation, and training support to start and enhance existing programs and services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
4. Evaluate and monitor State programs delivering services to deaf and hard of hearing persons to determine their effectiveness; identify and promote new services or programs whenever necessary; and make recommendations to public officials about changes necessary to improve the quality and delivery of services, programs, and activities and about future financial support to continue existing programs and establish new programs.
5. Monitor State funded programs delivering services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing to determine the extent that promised and mandated services are delivered.
6. Review, evaluate, and participate in the development of proposed and amended statutes, rules, regulations, and policies relating to services, programs, and activities for deaf and hard of hearing persons and make recommendations on existing statutes, rules, regulations, and policies to the Governor, General Assembly, and State agencies.
7. Promote cooperation among State and local agencies providing educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
8. Establish rules and regulations related to evaluation, certification, licensure, and training standards of interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing persons.

FIVE-YEAR IDHHC STRATEGIC PLAN & PRIORITIES

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2029

LONG-TERM EXTERNAL GOALS

EFFORT 1: Organizational Visibility and Engagement with Communities and Stakeholders

Goal 1: Enhance visibility for the Commission and its programs and services.

Objective 1: Modernize dissemination of information of all Commission activities through various uses of communication technology.

Goal 2: Enhance visibility and presence of the Commission to all members of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities and stakeholders.

Objective 1: Increase the Commission's participation and presence within the communities and stakeholders.

Objective 2: Increase Commission collaboration and engagement activities with the communities and stakeholders.

Objective 3: Expand the visibility of the Commission and Illinois Board of Interpreters meetings and expand engagement with the communities and stakeholders.

EFFORT 2: Foster Collaboration to Modernize Communication Access

Goal 1: Coordinate efforts to improve communication access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind persons in the state of Illinois.

Objective 1: Provide education, consultation and/or training support to state agencies and to public and private entities to improve communication access in their programs and services.

Objective 2: Provide communication access policies, resources and guidelines to stakeholders, communities and individuals.

EFFORT 3: Data-Informed Collection and Sharing

Goal 1: Conduct data-informed collection and information collection activities to guide decisions and improve success.

Objective 1: Identify reliable sources of data and engage in collaborative activities to find publicly available and reliable data relevant to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind persons and Sign Language Interpreters.

Objective 2: Provide publicly accessible data and information relevant to Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing persons and sign language interpreters.

SHORT-TERM INTERNAL GOALS

EFFORT 1: Advancing Statewide Sign Language Interpreters

Goal 1: Reform effectiveness of Interpreter Licensing, Certification, and Testing in the state of Illinois.

Objective 1: Explore internal processes for improving processing times for sign language interpreter licensing applications.

Objective 2: Explore potential efforts to increase the number of available sign language interpreter written and performance testing options.

Goal 2: Provide support and collaboration with the Illinois Interpreter Education, Training, and Preparation Programs.

Objective 1: Provide data-informed information to Interpreter Education, Training, and Preparation Programs to support efforts for program long-term sustainability.

Objective 2: Collaborate and participate in the identified Interpreter Education, Training, and Preparation Programs meetings and activities.

EFFORT 2: Elevate Culture of Inclusion and Equity for Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

Goal 1: Elevate the Commission's participation in the State of Illinois' ongoing commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

Objective 1: *Review and update Commission marketing and promotional materials for alignment with the State of Illinois branding to reflect the diverse population of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities.*

Objective 2: *Support mandated and recommended participation of Commission employees and appointees in the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives and activities.*



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