



State of Illinois
Illinois Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission



Annual Report 2021

Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021



Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission

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In Memory of Janet S. Lambert

To Governor Pritzker and the People of Illinois:

On behalf of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC), I am pleased to submit the 2021 Annual Report reflecting the fiscal year from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

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. The Commission also serves as the regulatory and licensing body responsible for licensing sign language interpreters in the State in accordance to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

During the course of the fiscal year, the Commission continued to meet the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission navigated through the challenges by transitioned to remote working environments, conducted meetings remotely using the video technology platform for Commissioners and Licensure Board with livestream to the public in accordance to the Open Meetings Act, and practiced to safely work in the office on a part time basis in adherence to the health and safety protocols.

Despite the challenges limiting the Commission's capabilities to create or accomplish certain goals and objectives, the Commission staff continued its work diligently to assure equality, respect, accessibility and independence for all individuals with a hearing loss. This annual report highlights important information, notable accomplishments, and statistics.

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 isolated barriers Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals face on a daily basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Benro Ogunyipe, Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE COMMISSION

Commissioners & Staff _____	4
Mission Statement, Objectives & Core Functions _____	5

PROGRAM & OPERATIONS

Commission Program Highlights _____	6
Commission Budget: Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriation & Expenditure _____	7
By the Numbers FY21, FY20, & FY19 _____	8
Legislative Bills & Resolutions _____	8

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act)

Interpreter Licensure Board _____	9
Illinois Interpreter Licensing & BEI Certification _____	10
Illinois Interpreter Training & Interpreter Preparation Programs _____	11

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	–	Wheaton (Chairperson)
Amy Blough	–	Peoria
Joseph Culpepper	–	Bloomington
Susan Dramin-Weiss	–	Champaign
Michael Dubowe	–	Normal
David Frazier	–	University Park
Lori Krakora	–	Naperville
Jarom Matheson	–	Chicago
Jennifer Sender	–	Chicago
Kevin Smith	–	Berwyn

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
Janet Lambert	-	Interpreter Coordinator
Lee Taylor	-	Office Assistant

INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF PROGRAM

The Commission operates the Interpreter for the Deaf Program that includes Interpreter Licensing and BEI Certification in accordance to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Interpreter Licensure Board provides recommendations to the Commission Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. Information about the sign language interpreters including board members of the Interpreter Licensure Board and Interpreter Licensing and BEI Certification during the fiscal year can be found on Pages 9, 10, and 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 Deaf and Hard of Hearing community outcry, the House and Senate both overrode the Governor's veto. While officially established on January 1, 1997, IDHHC 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 Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. During the Fiscal Year 2021, the Commission received 17,618 public inquiries and provided requested information and referral as appropriate to individuals, and public and private entities for issues including, but not limited to, accessibility and accommodation issues, advocacy organizations, assistive technology, centers on independent living, discrimination complaints, educational options, service and resource availability, sign language interpreters and communication access, telecommunication equipment, and state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. On an ongoing basis, the Commission reviews federal and state statutes, regulations, and policies regarding Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

Community Outreach & Collaboration

The Commission promotes outreach effort to all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities to increase visibility and awareness of the Commission program and operations. Some of the highlights during the Fiscal Year 2021, the Commission presented or participated in the meetings: ADA Steering Committee, Deaf Services Coordinator Meetings, Equip for Equality Priorities Meeting, Illinois Service Resource Center (ISRC) Statewide Leadership Meetings, ISD Advisory Council Meetings, and Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf Meetings.

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. One of the highlights during the Fiscal Year 2021, the Commission collaborated with the Illinois Department of Public Health on the vaccination guidance for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Persons including the creation and distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card (pictured right) to the health care community. The Illinois Department of Public Health reaffirmed the need for the health care community to ensure clear, effective communication, including availability of interpreter services that is accessible and meets the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.



1214

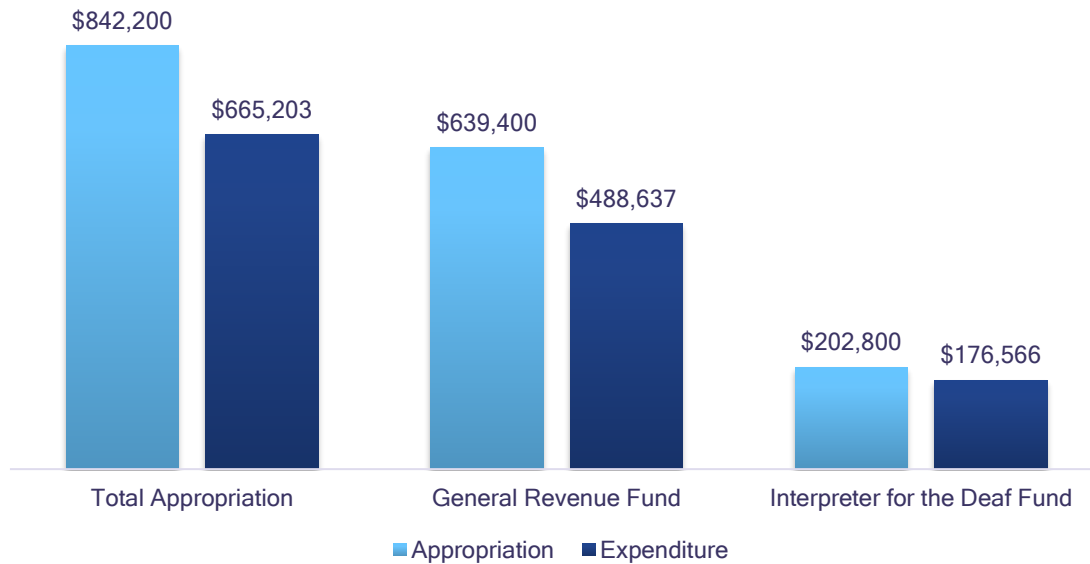
Communication Visor Cards

The Commission distributed 1214 Communication Visor Cards to state, local, and municipal law enforcement agencies. The Commission continues to educate service providers and employers of their obligations to provide effective communication under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

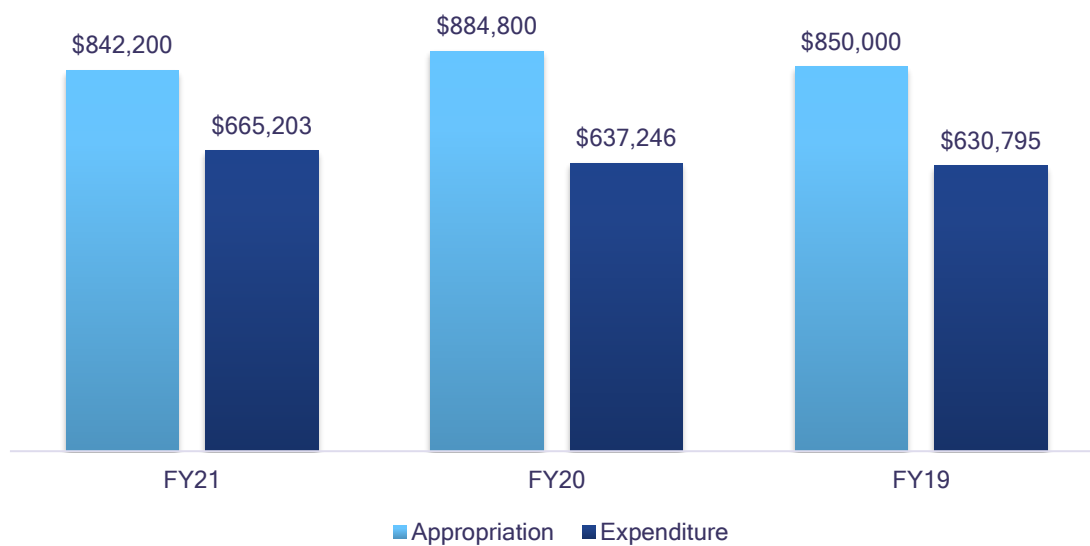
COMMISSION BUDGET

\$842,200

Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriation & Expenditure



Appropriations & Expenditures History



BY THE NUMBERS

	FY21	FY20	FY19
Public Inquiries	17,168	15,017	15,774
Educational and Informational Materials Distributed	17,945	48,692	23,472
Interpreters Participated in IDHHC Sponsored or Hosted Professional Development Opportunities	109	123	1,513
Communication Visor Cards Distributed	1214	4,179	6,691
Subscribers to IDHHC Electronic Mail Communications	732	658	652

17945

Number of Educational Information and Materials Distributed

Legislative Bills & Resolutions

The Illinois General Assembly's main functions include enacting, amending or repealing laws; passing resolutions; adopting spending bills; and examining proposed legislation. 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 bills and resolutions that are relevant to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities in Illinois. The Commission also provides a list of relevant bills and resolutions to the public on the website for informational purposes only and does not necessarily reflect the Commission's position. During the Fiscal Year 2021, some bills became laws that effect the needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind population. Visit the Commission website for a list of bills that became Public Acts.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

The Commission is a licensing body responsible for the enforcement of the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007. The Commission also administers the Illinois Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification test; maintains an online directory of all licensed interpreters by proficiency levels, geographic regions, counties, and contact information; and conducts investigation of alleged violations and in cases of substantiated allegations, various voluntary corrective measures are used including imposition of discipline when appropriate.

INTERPRETER LICENSURE BOARD MEMBERS

The Interpreter Licensure Board consists of seven (7) members appointed by the IDHHC 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 IDHHC Director on issues related to the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007.

Laura Braucht	–	Jacksonville (Chairperson)
Hershella Ashford	–	Chicago
Kimberly Berger	–	Murphysboro
Donna Elliot	–	Creston
Teri Hedding	–	Palos Hills
Barbara Pacourek	–	Brookfield
Rachel Kruk	–	Monee

STAFF

Janet Lambert	–	Interpreter Coordinator
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109

Number of Interpreters Participated in the Commission Sponsored Professional Development Opportunities

2021 Professional Interpreter Development Opportunities

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commission cancelled its Annual Interpreter Conference. The Commission sponsored alternative options for professional interpreter development opportunities: *English Comprehension – Preparing for the TEP; Mirror, Mirror – Reflections of Ethics and Professionalism; Oh My...I Can't Interpret That...How?;* and *Deliberate Practice*. The Commission also sponsored two week-long Basic Interpreter Institutes and an Advanced Interpreter Institute. A total of 109 attendees, for which 41 of them were RID certified interpreters.

**2021 Interpreter
Professional
Development
Workshops**
109 Total
Attendees

Illinois Interpreter Licensing & BEI Certification

	FY21	FY20	FY19
Total Licensing & BEI Applications	1104	1,279	1,259

Illinois Interpreter Licensing Statistics

835

Licensed Interpreters

28

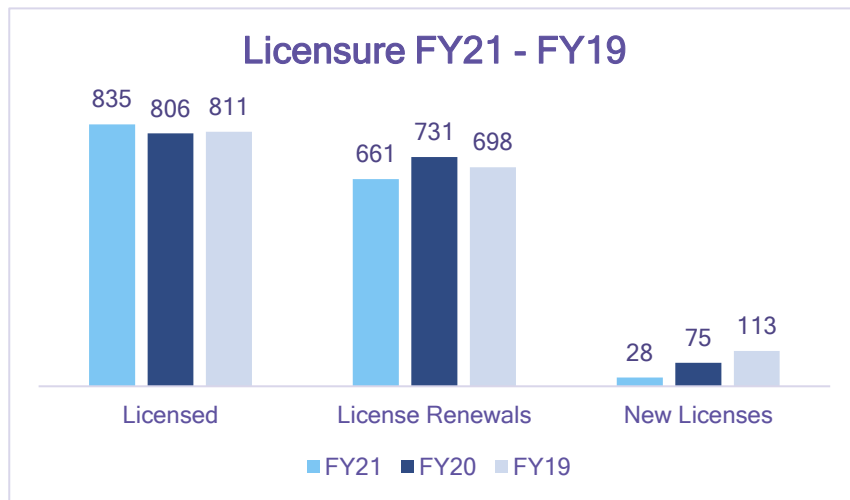
New Licenses

661

License Renewals

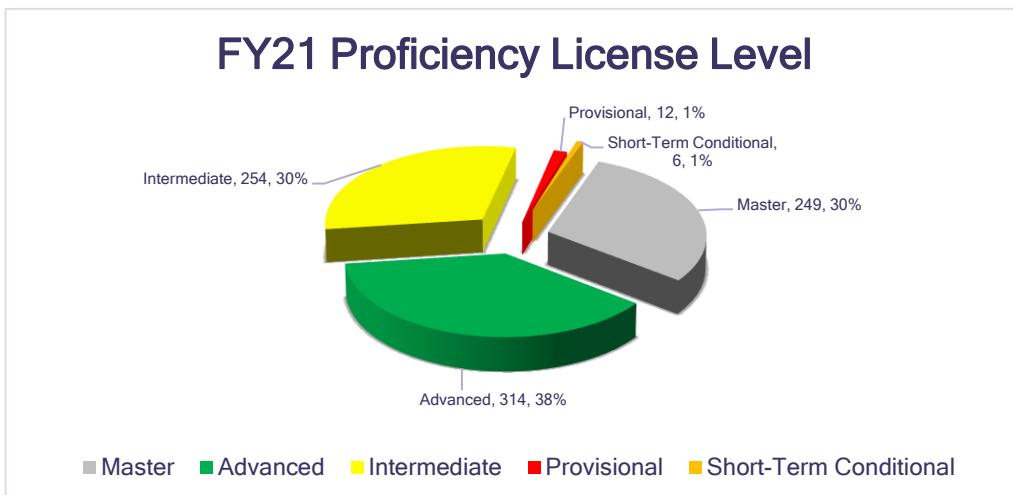
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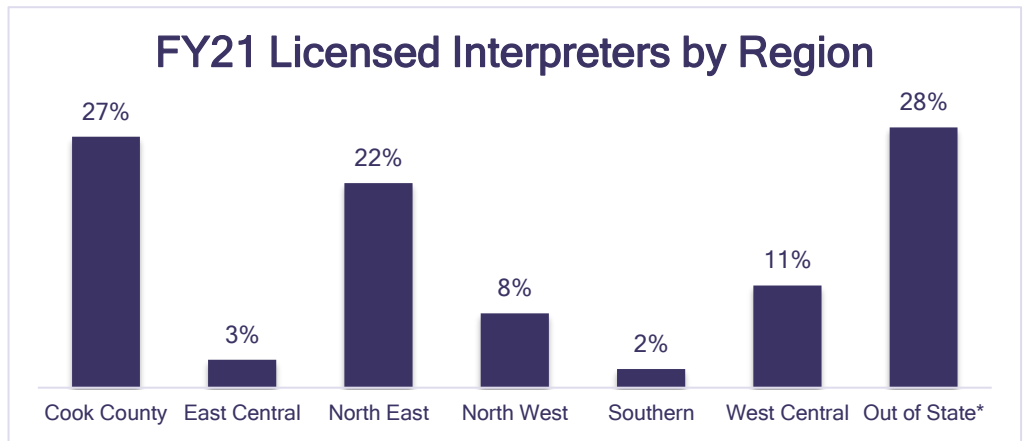
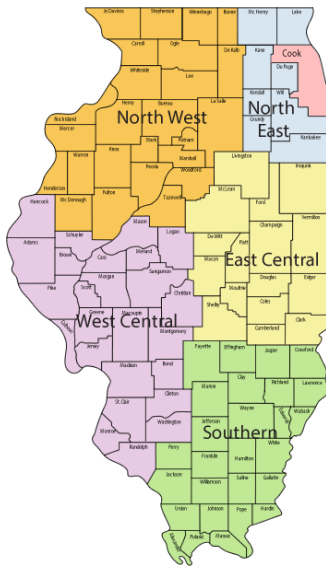
Proficiency Level Upgrades



What's New?

The Commission filed an emergency rulemaking with the Secretary of State to include a new license, Illinois Short-Term Conditional License, to the rules that address the indefinite suspension of the interpreter testing and certification process for graduates and prospective sign language interpreters due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



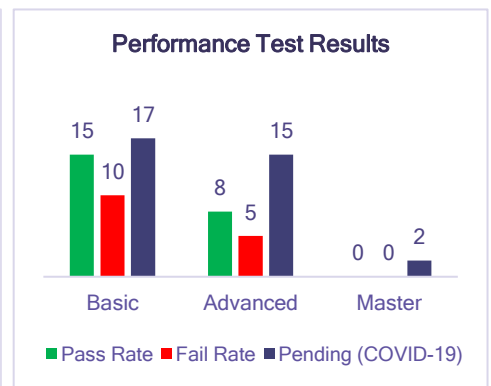
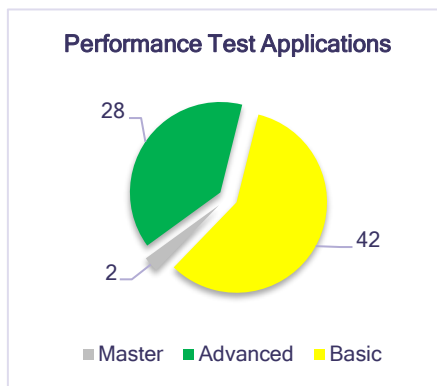
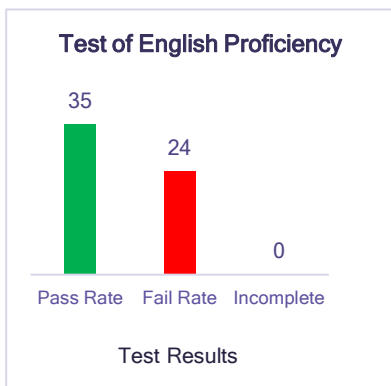


*Top 3 Out of State Licensed Interpreters
 1. Missouri 4%
 2. Florida 3%
 3. Wisconsin 2%

BEI Testing and Certification Statistics

	FY21		FY20		FY19		
BEI Certification Tests Administered	0*		131		272		
Test of English Proficiency	Performance Test	0*	0*	72	59	126	146

*No BEI Certification Tests administered during the fiscal year due to COVID-19 pandemic.



Illinois Interpreter Training & Interpreter Preparation Programs

- College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn
- Columbia College Chicago, Chicago
- Illinois Central College, East Peoria
- John A. Logan College, Carterville
- *Quincy University, Quincy
- *William Rainey Harper College, Palatine

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

*Denotes Program Suspended or Closed



Electronic Publication available at www.idhhc.illinois.gov

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