



Department of  
**Human Services**

# Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing

2016 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Human Services  
Division of Rehabilitation Services  
400 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243



The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind & Hard of Hearing (TCDDDBHH) was created in 1978 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The applicable statute can be found in Tennessee Code Annotated 74-4-2102. An act to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 71, Chapter 4, Part 21, relative to the council for the deaf and hard of hearing was enacted by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam on May 20, 2013. The act changed the name to the Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing (TCDDDBHH). The act also expanded the Council to eighteen (18) members. The Council is located within the Tennessee Department of Human Services and is a part of the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

### ***Our Purpose***

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing exists to serve as an advocate for appropriate services affecting Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing persons through coordination, public awareness, consultation and education in areas of public service, healthcare, education, and employment.

### ***Responsibilities***

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing has the statutory responsibility to:

1. Advocate for services affecting people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in the areas of public service, healthcare, education, vocational training, employment, emergency services, resource sharing, and communication;
2. Act as a bureau of information for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing to state agencies and public institutions providing healthcare, employment, vocational services, educational services, resource sharing, and emergency services to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing, and to local agencies and programs;

3. Collect facts, statistics, and other special studies of conditions affecting the health and welfare of people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in Tennessee;
4. Provide for a mutual exchange of ideas and information on the national, state, and local levels;
5. Encourage and assist local governments and agencies in the development of programs for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
6. Cooperate with public and private agencies and units of local, state, and federal governments in promoting coordination in programs for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
7. Authorize the Executive Director to submit an annual report and needs assessment to the Council that reviews the status of state services for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. The Council shall submit the approved report and the needs assessment to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives and make this report available to organizations serving the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing; and
8. Make recommendations for needed improvements and to serve as an advisory body regarding new legislation affecting the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Council.

## July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 Report

### ***Major Activities***

The Council was involved in a number of activities during the last state fiscal year, described below:

- Provided extensive communication access training covering live interpreters, communication access, real-time transcript, real-time texting, computers, CapTel, video remote interpreting, video relay service, and other information regarding telecommunication equipment.

- Hosted meetings to receive concerns and feedback from Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing consumers on how to improve statewide services. Information was reported back to Council members and community centers on their behalf. Supported community centers in providing Technology and Deaf Culture workshops. Also began development of law enforcement training for officers to receive training regarding communication with a person who is Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing in child abuse cases.
- A new committee has also been created, called the Domestic Violence Task Force Sub-Committee, to develop effective communication and access for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing domestic violence victims and law enforcement.
- Continued to update the TCDDDBHH webpage to increase public awareness of research, education, and informational activities about the abilities and capacity of persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing. The web address is <http://www.tn.gov/humanservices/article/tcddbhh>

### ***Community Centers for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing***

The Division of Rehabilitation Services provides funding for Community Centers for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in Johnson City, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. These Community Centers report to the Council during quarterly meetings and submit their statistical data to the Executive Director of TCDDDBHH who compiles it for the Division. The Division provided funding for six (6) regional centers to provide:

- Interpreting services
- Information and referrals
- Peer counseling and independent living skills
- Educational workshops
- Help in accessing community services

The following statistics demonstrate the wide array of services provided by the six centers:

Service Contacts for People that are Deaf/DB/HH	<b>22,227</b>
Coordination of Interpreting Services	<b>24,355</b>
Units of Technical Assistance Provided to Employers	<b>1,155</b>
Units of Independent Living Skills Taught	<b>925</b>
Sign Language or Speech Reading Training	<b>825</b>
Workshop/Seminar Hours on Deafness	<b>435</b>
Outreach and Referral	<b>1,518</b>

## ***Membership***

Members are appointed to the Council by the Governor and serve voluntarily without compensation. Most seats on the Council are mandated by statute. The current members of the Council are:

April Haggard	Tennessee Association of the Deaf
Jennifer Thorpe	Hearing Loss Association of America
Brenda Sellers	Tennessee Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
Cherrell Campbell-Street	Tennessee Department of Human Services
Larry Godwin	Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security
Steve Farmer	Tennessee School for the Deaf
Lana Bazemore	Tennessee Department of Human Services
Philip Yater	Deaf Consumer Representative
Gay Nelson	Hard of Hearing Consumer Representative
Eric Fleet	Deaf Consumer Representative
Bob Geldreich	Hard of Hearing Consumer Representative
Alex King	Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Janie Neal	Deaf-Blind Consumer Representative
Louvisia Conley	Minority Consumer Representative
Jacque Cundall	Tennessee Department of Health
Donnie Moore	Tennessee Hands and Voices
Monique Brazelton	Tennessee Regulatory Authority
Eddie Burgess	Tennessee Emergency Management Agency

## ***TCDDDBHH Statewide Goal Plans:***

1. A mental health provision may be needed for those who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. Currently there are no facilities that provide mental and behavioral health services specific to these communities. TCDDDBHH (DHS) assisted to form the Tennesseans for Behavioral Health Accessibility affiliation in partnership with Disability Rights Tennessee and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS). Strategies have been discussed and a survey has been developed to obtain more specific input from these communities.
2. More qualified professional sign language interpreters may be needed for persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. Currently, Tennessee does not have a requirement for interpreters to maintain a license or certification for interpreting. TCCDBHH is reviewing ways to improve the level of certification and training.
3. TCDDDBHH helped to develop the Emergency Awareness and Readiness Services (EARS) in 2008. This group has been active in training weather spotters, holding First Aid courses, and providing needed alerting devices such as visual smoke detectors. TCDDDBHH has continued to work with EARS for improving on effective communication access with the live closed captioning on local news stations, and receiving news alerts via text messaging. Alliances have also been formed with the National Weather Bureau, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Tennessee Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America of Tennessee chapters, and several organizations for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.
4. TCDDDBHH is working with community centers to develop a Support Service Providers (SSP) program (also known as sighted guides) for Deaf-Blind people who require its services. Community centers have found it challenging to find SSPs. The TCDDDBHH will assist the community centers with incentives, hiring, and training for SSPs, to increase access for Deaf-Blind consumers.

Reported and Submitted by Paul Robertson, Executive Director