

»»» OCTOBER 2025

## West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

# NEWSLETTER



*“Advocacy is empathy, compassion, and community at work.”- Janna Cachola*

### Letter from the Executive Director

#### Equal Access to Health Care for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Patients

Federal disability laws require health care providers to ensure equal access and effective communication for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973):** Applies to federally funded health care services and facilities.
- **ADA Title II:** Applies to all state and local (public) health care providers.
- **ADA Title III:** Applies to all private health care providers.



#### What does this mean for patients?

Under the ADA, private medical providers must provide qualified ASL interpreters for important conversations such as medical history, diagnoses, and treatment plans. Providers are responsible for covering the cost. In-person interpreters should be prioritized, though Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) may be used if it is effective and the patient agrees.

#### Can family or friends interpret?

Generally, no. Family members or friends often lack the skills needed, may have conflicts of interest, and could compromise confidentiality. Qualified interpreters are essential to ensure communication is accurate, impartial, and effective.

#### Connecting Access and Interpreter Standards

Access to quality health care relies heavily on the availability of skilled interpreters. Just as the law requires health care providers to ensure effective communication, WVCDHH must also ensure that interpreters working in West Virginia meet clear professional standards.

#### Update for West Virginia Interpreters

The Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) is only available to candidates who live, work, or attend an interpreter training program in Virginia. Because of this, **WVCDHH will no longer accept VQAS as a credential for registration with the West Virginia Registry of Interpreters (WVRI).**

We are in the process of notifying all interpreters directly. In the meantime, if you receive questions about this change, please direct them to WVCDHH for clarification.

Thank you for helping us keep interpreting standards consistent and aligned with our mission of ensuring full access for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in West Virginia.

*Eric Essington, Ph.D.*

**Questions or want to get involved?  
Contact me at: [erik.j.essington@wv.gov](mailto:erik.j.essington@wv.gov)**



## Parent-to-Parent

### *Growing Up Deaf, Raising Deaf Pride*

I was born hearing, but at three months old I became very sick with a high fever, which caused my deafness. When I was four, my parents began learning sign language, and at five years old I had cochlear implant surgery. That same year, I started speech therapy and worked hard until I was 18, learning to talk well



Even with all that progress, life at home was not always easy. My whole family is hearing, and during family time, they would talk but not sign. I often felt left out, sitting quietly by myself. Still, I truly love being Deaf — it's a big part of who I am.

Middle school was especially hard. I was bullied badly because I was Deaf. During one incident, I was hit on the head several times, hard enough that my cochlear implant transmitter fell off and broke. That moment was terrifying and painful, but it became part of my story — it taught me how strong and resilient I truly am.

When I was 16, I visited the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf (WVSD) in Romney for the first time. It was my first experience seeing a Deaf school, and it completely changed my perspective. I met Deaf students signing, learning, and living together — and I loved it. After spending my whole life in hearing schools, where I was bullied and never truly fit in, WVSD felt like a place where I belonged. I told my mom I wanted to transfer and live in the dorms, but she said no, so I stayed at my hearing school.

Today, I'm a proud mom of four amazing children: Emily, my oldest, is 10 years old and hard of hearing. She failed her newborn hearing test, but she's grown into such a smart and caring girl. She loves sign language and often acts like an interpreter for fun. Nevaeh, who is 8, is fully deaf and also failed her newborn test. She's full of life, and she loves meeting other Deaf people, laughing, and enjoying that connection. Paige is 5 years old, also hard of hearing, and James Jr., my youngest, is 4 years old and partly deaf. All of them sign beautifully, and they love joking and chatting with each other in sign.

At first, my children attended a regular hearing school with no other Deaf students. Nevaeh would tell me she wished there were Deaf kids there because she felt so alone, and Emily was bullied for wearing hearing aids. Sometimes interpreters didn't even show up. Watching them go through the same struggles I faced broke my heart. I decided to move them to Shoals Elementary, where they have a Deaf education program and Deaf peers.

The change was incredible. My kids thanked me and said, "Thank you so much, Mom — you made us feel better." They weren't bullied anymore, and they could finally talk and laugh with other Deaf students. All I want is for my kids to be happy and confident, and this was a huge step toward that.

We recently visited the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB). As we toured the campus, Nevaeh saw students signing and asked, "Are they Deaf?" Afterward, both Emily and Nevaeh told me, "We want to go to a Deaf school — it looks fun!" I just smiled and thought, oh boy, but deep inside I felt so proud.



I love being Deaf, and I love being a mom even more. Raising my children with sign language, pride, and a strong Deaf identity is the greatest blessing in my life. Seeing them grow up confident and happy in who they are fills my heart with joy every single day.

*Brittany Petery*



## Anonymous Survey Consent

Marshall University IRB  
 Approved On: 10/01/2025  
 Study Number: 2297339

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "***A Survey of Caregivers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in West Virginia,***" designed to analyze the experiences, well-being, access to early intervention services, and the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in West Virginia as reported by their caregivers. The study is being conducted by **Principal Investigator R. Lanai Jennings**, with Co-Investigators Jean Mane Hunter-Suddreth, Erik Essington, Julie Turley, and Sandra Stroebel from Marshall University. The study has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research is being conducted as part of the program evaluation requirements for Jean Marie Hunter-Suddreth and Erik Essington.

This survey is comprised of approximately 77 items and takes 20-30 minutes to complete. It consists of a variety of questions related to a child's background and experiences, early intervention history, communication use, current school factors, and the caregiver's perceptions of services. Your replies will be anonymous, so do not type your name anywhere on the form. There are no known risks involved with this study. Participation IS completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw. If you choose not to participate, you can leave the survey site. You may choose not to answer any question by simply leaving it blank. Once you complete the survey, you can delete your browsing history for added security. Completing the online survey indicates your consent for the use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact R. Lanai Jennings at 304-746-206, Jean Marie Hunter-Suddreth at 681-245-7805, and/or Erik Essington at 304-533-8032.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

By completing this survey, you are also confirming that you are 18 years of age or older.

Please print this page for your records.

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To participate in the study, you can find the survey using the **website link** or by scanning the **QR Code**.

[https://marshall.azl.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV\\_daRJBH9R6w9YW](https://marshall.azl.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_daRJBH9R6w9YW)





## Community Spotlight



# Support Group for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults, Kids, and Families

### Who can attend?

Anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing – and their families.

All ages are welcome!



### Facilitators:



**Jodi Cottrell, Au.D., CCC-A, LSLC Cert. AVEEd.**  
Assistant Professor/Program Director  
Marshall University (Hearing & Oral)  
cottrellj@marshall.edu



**Erik Essington, PhD**  
School Psychologist Intern  
Marshall University (Deaf, Oral, & ASL)  
essington@marshall.edu



**Jean Marie Hunter-Suddreth, LMFT**  
School Psychologist Intern  
Marshall University (Deaf & ASL)  
huntersuddre@marshall.edu



**Marshall University Speech & Hearing Center (MUSHC)**  
Smith Hall Room 143



**First Tuesday of every month**  
6:00 – 7:00 pm

### WVDH Community Survey

The West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) is committed to improving access, services, and resources for Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened individuals across our state. Your input is essential in helping us understand the needs of our community and guide our future work.

We invite you to take a few minutes to complete the WVDH Community Survey. Your feedback will help us identify gaps, celebrate successes, and create programs and initiatives that truly make a difference.

Together, we can build a stronger, more connected West Virginia for everyone.



**Scan the QR code  
or use the link  
below to take the  
survey!**



**We Want to Hear From YOU!**

<https://forms.gle/MDLXtV9PYH5DAMRj6>



**REAL**

# REGIONAL EARLY ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE

**CLERC  
CENTER**  
AT GALLAUDET**AIDB** Alabama Institute  
for Deaf and Blind  
Deaf. Blind. Limitless.

The Regional Early Acquisition of Language (**REAL**) Project is a collaborative initiative between the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind. Its mission is to connect deaf and hard of hearing children with their communities through rich language experiences and meaningful engagement.

REAL is dedicated to ensuring that every child has full access to language from the very start and that families are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to thrive. By working closely with early intervention providers and the medical community, the project is building a comprehensive network of supports designed to help children grow, develop, and transition smoothly into school—setting them up for lifelong success.



The **Bilingual Stories Bookshelf** app is a cornerstone of the REAL Project, created to provide deaf and hard of hearing children—and their families—with easy access to bilingual storybooks in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. By supporting language development from birth through age three, the app helps establish a strong foundation for lifelong communication, literacy, and learning.

Through this innovative platform, entire books are translated into ASL and presented as a virtual bookshelf of signed storybook videos. Families can engage with the app through three interactive modes, making storytime both accessible and enriching.

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Enjoy the entire story signed, with the book's pages as the background.

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Experience page-by-page videos, with each page accompanied by its text.

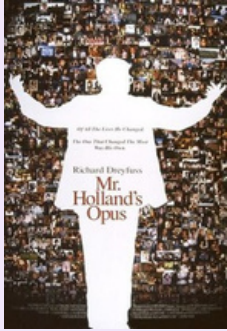
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Explore key vocabulary words signed and fingerspelled.

Each series featured in the Bilingual Stories Bookshelf app will include original stories written and illustrated by Deaf community members, celebrating Deaf culture and giving children authentic, relatable characters and experiences to connect with from the very start.

For information on **Special Access for Families** with Young Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children and **Special Discounts** for schools, programs, and libraries, visit the Clerc Center website at: <https://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/real/bookshelf-app/> or scan the QR code.





### Mr. Holland's Opus

1995

Mr. Holland's Opus follows music teacher Glenn Holland, whose life changes when he learns his newborn son, Cole, is Deaf. At first, Mr. Holland struggles to accept his son's deafness and feels disconnected, but over time, he learns American Sign Language and discovers new ways to connect with Cole. The film explores themes of communication, acceptance, and the importance of embracing Deaf identity. It's a heartfelt story about family, love, and learning to truly "listen" beyond sound.



### The Sign for Home

Bell Fell, Author

When a young DeafBlind man learns the girl he thought was lost forever might still be out there, he embarks on a life-changing journey to find her—and his freedom.

Arlo Dilly is young, handsome, and eager to meet the right girl. He also happens to be DeafBlind, a Jehovah's Witness, and under the strict guardianship of his controlling uncle. His chances of finding someone to love seem slim to none.

Many years ago, at a boarding school for the Deaf, Arlo met the love of his life—a mysterious girl with onyx eyes and beautifully expressive hands which told him the most amazing stories. But tragedy struck, and their love was lost forever. Or so Arlo thought.



## Research Participation Opportunity

Hello,

My name is Aleecia Campos. I am a Master's student at Texas A&M University pursuing my Master's degree in Communication with a focus on Health Communication. I am conducting research for my Master's Thesis on Patient-Centered Communication for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the medical setting.

I graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor's Degree in Corporate Communications and a minor in ASL Interpreting. I am hard of hearing, and I have a sibling who is Deaf. I am seeking participants within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community who:

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Self-identify as Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Were born with hearing loss or lost their hearing later in life

The interviews will take place via Zoom and ask you about your experience with communication in a medical setting. All information given will remain confidential, as the study is in accordance with the TAMU IRB.

If you are interested in participating in this study, have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [aleeciacampos@tamu.edu](mailto:aleeciacampos@tamu.edu). I would be delighted to discuss this further with you.





## AKA Professional Services & MOV Signers Club (MOVSC)

### ASL Workshops

October 2025, 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month, 6:00 PM

Betsey Mills Club  
300 4th St.  
Marietta, OH 45750

**Cost: Free for Betsey Hills Club members, \$10 per class for non-members (includes one adult + one child)**

**Build communication skills, connect with your community, and learn to sign—one sign at a time.**


### MOVSC Social Gathering

Saturday, October 4, 2005, 6 PM

Panera  
506 ½ Pike Street,  
Marietta, OH

## ◀◀◀ Things to Do

To become a member or for more information about The Betsey Mills Club:  
☎ 740.373.4981

For more information about AKA Professional Services MOVSC, scan the QR code to follow them on 



## WEST VIRGINIA DEAF SERVICE CENTER (WVDC)

### Deaf Coffee Chat

Join us for ASL Activities, Deaf culture, games, snacks, and more!  
All ages and skill levels welcome!

Friday, October 3, 2025, 5:30-8:30 PM

Restore  
815 Court Street  
Charleston, WV

Saturday, October 18, 2025, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

West Huntington Public Library  
901 14<sup>th</sup> Street, West  
Huntington, WV

Tuesday, October 7, 2025, 4:00-7:00 PM

2501 Dudley Ave.  
Parkersburg, WV

Sunday, September 26, 2025, 6:00-9:00 PM

Clarion Inn  
4328 William L. Wilson FWY  
Harpers Ferry, WV

To learn more about WVDC go to [www.wvdeafservicecenter.org](http://www.wvdeafservicecenter.org)

OR

Scan the QR Code



## LUKE LEE LISTENING, LANGUAGE & LEARNING LAB

### Hear We Go 5k Run/Walk

Tuesday, October 4, 2025

Registration: 7:30 am,  
100-yard dash kids race: 8:30 am,  
5k run/walk: 9:00 am

Learning Lab (The L) at Marshall University is hosting a 5k run/walk and a kids' race this fall at Ritter Park. This event aims to raise awareness and support for children who are deaf and hard of hearing who use listening and spoken language.

Registration Fees:  
5K Race: \$25 Pre-registration  
\$30 Day-of Registration,  
Kids' Race: \$5 Pre-registration  
10 Day-of Registration

Scan the QR Code to register



## Beckley Association for the Deaf

### Dinner

Saturday, November 8, 2026, 12:00-6:00 PM, Dinner @ 3:00 PM

Lewis Community Center  
469 Central Ave.  
Oak Hill, WV 25901

Admission is free! Please bring a covered dish.

Come have fun! This is our Last Deaf Club event. We are closing, so come celebrate with us!!!!

For more information, scan the QR code to message Robin Tackett on 



**Saturday, October 11, 2025, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM**

Battelle North at Greater Columbus Convention Center  
400 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43215

We are the foremost touring trade show for, by, and about deaf people. Since 2003, the DeafNation Expo showcase has attracted over 1 million attendees with hundreds of events throughout the United States.

Scan the QR Code  
to register



## LANGUAGE FIRST

### [Navigating Language Dysfluency: Strategies for Interpreters](#)

**Sunday, October 5, 2025, 4:00 -6:00 PM ET**

This workshop equips interpreters with the knowledge and tools to effectively work with Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children who present with language dysfluency due to limited early language access. Participants will explore common patterns of dysfluency in American Sign Language (ASL), understand how language deprivation impacts cognitive-linguistic development, and discuss the unique challenges this creates for interpretation.

**Workshop Fee: \$39**

*\*This event is offered for 0.20 ASHA CEUs and 0.20 Professional Studies CEUs at the "some previous knowledge" content level.*

### [Seeing Language: How Vision Impacts Language Development in Children](#)

**Sunday, October 19, 2025, 1:00 - 3:00 PM ET**

This presentation explores the critical importance of early vision screening in infants and toddlers from birth to three years of age. Attendees will gain an understanding of visual development milestones, risk factors for early childhood vision disorders, and evidence-based screening tools appropriate for young children.

**Workshop Fee: \$39**

*\*This event is offered for 0.20 ASHA CEUs.*

### [Trauma and Deaf Education](#)

**Sunday, November 2, 2025, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM ET**

This session will introduce ACEs, PCEs, and examine how someone's trauma history impacts their work in deaf education. Participants will engage in self-reflection, review research about trauma and the deaf community, explore self-care, and practice interpreting techniques to employ in the educational setting and beyond.

**Workshop Fee: \$59**

*\*This event is offered for 0.30 ASHA CEUs and 0.30 RID CEUs.*

For additional  
information  
or to register  
go to

[language1st.org/events](https://language1st.org/events)

OR

Scan the QR Code



## Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment Training Center

[Interpreters are Related Service Providers but What Does That Mean?](#)



**Saturday, November 15, 2025, 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM ET**

**Registration Deadline: Monday, November 10, 2025, 12:00 PM CT**

**Target Audience: Educational Interpreters, Deaf Education Directors, Deaf Education Administrators, and Staff**

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), interpreters supporting deaf students are Related Service Providers, in the same category as audiologists and speech professionals (IDEA, Section 300.34). And while it's now more widely understood that educational interpreters are professional providers, what does that really mean? Using a co-creation framework, the presenter will guide participants through activities to untangle our responsibilities as Related Service Providers. How do we document student use of services and participate in IEP meetings? This session will allow us to collaboratively share our expertise so we can be more proactive IEP team members.

For additional information on this  
virtual workshop, scan the QR code



The West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (WVSDB) Outreach is sponsoring participation in this live online event, exclusively for professionals serving schools in West Virginia. To receive a sponsorship coupon code and registration details, please email the WVSDB Outreach Director, Mary Anne Clendenin at: [mclenden@k12.wv.us](mailto:mclenden@k12.wv.us).

