West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Minutes

August 7, 2026

WVCDHH
100 Dee Drive
Charleston, WV 25311

Commission Members Present:	Commission Members Absent:	Commission Staff Present:	Public Visitors:	Interpreters:
• John Burdette • Nancy Gillispie • Gloria Hollen • Meegan Wolfe • Angela Wilson • Crystal Law • Dawn Embrey-King • Shakita Micek • Mark McDaniel • Jennifer Casto *(proctor for C. Burch)*	• Teresa Marks • Mary Ann Clendenin	• Paul See • Sarah Lowther	• Earl Hollen • Chris Mick • Sylvia Mick • Erin Fulton • Julie Ann Shoeman	• Ashley Turley • Holly Higby

Call to Order

- Gloria Hollen called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Reading of Mission Statement and Introductions

- John Burdette read the Mission Statement.

Minutes

The minutes from the May 1, 2026 meeting were reviewed. Crystal Law made the motion to approve the minutes. Angela Wilson seconded. Minutes were approved.

Public Comments

- No Public Comments

Staff Reports

Sarah Lowther and Paul See shared information from the written board report. Highlights included:

- Four board terms expired in June 2026. All four positions are designated for the deaf and hard of hearing community. One of the four positions, formerly held by Paul, is now vacant.
    - Roy Forman has decided not to renew his term. Applications are being accepted to fill this role.
    - John Burdette and Gloria Hollen would like to renew their terms and have submitted their applications to continue serving on the Board.
    - Three of the five D/HH positions on the board must be filled with recommendations from WVAD. A letter of recommendation has been provided by WVAD President, Hal Hunter-Suddreth. The recommendations include Gloria Hollen, John Burdette, Chris Mick, Franny Lawrence-Walker, and Troy Osborne.
    - The audiologist position and the parent position expired in June 2025.
    - Paperwork to reappoint Nancy Gillispie for the audiologist position and appoint Christina Payne for the parent position have been submitted.
- The interpreting contract with Associated Interpreters for the Deaf expired on July 14, 2026. The solicitation for bids for new contracts opened on June 10, 2026 and closed on June 25, 2026. Two bids were received from Champ Interpreting and Purple Communications. The agreements for Champ and Purple were finalized on August 6, 2026.
- Senate Bill 210 requires Health and Human Resource Departments to establish performance plans using specific output and outcome measures, tracking actual performance against stated goals annually beginning July 1, 2027.
    - The main Metrics for WVCDHH will be to maintain the West Virginia Registry of Interpreters (WVRI) and design, validate, and implement a standardized state assessment that ensures all interpreters working in West Virginia meet the minimum competency standards required by state law.
- WVCDHH is under a corrective action plan following a Purchasing inspection of documents from July 2024 through June 2025. Due to the inability to provide documentation for purchases made by the former Executive Director, it is now required to coordinate all future purchases with the Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Health Finance.
- Newsletters are now being created quarterly to share relevant information with the D/HH community. The Summer 2026 newsletter was created and shared on May 29, 2026. The newsletter for Fall will be shared at the beginning of September.
- With the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) policy changes, WV interpreters will no longer be able to utilize the screening as a qualification. The Interpreter Task Force (ITF) was reestablished to create a state level assessment to support interpreters. The ITF has finalized the written portion of the assessment and is currently coordinating with the technology department to implement the testing process.
- We promote the use of and regularly update Facebook to communicate with members of the community. Posts provide information on upcoming events, trainings, job opportunities, and other important information.
    - Since May 2026, we have gained 26 followers for a total of 3,288.
    - There have been 269 posts made.
    - The highest post views were 3,842 with 1,535 viewers.
- A task force was created for the development of informative brochures for parents and families of deaf and hard of hearing newborns and children because limited information is provided after the initial screening in the hospital. The goal is to provide parents with in-depth information, options, and resources using a short brochure. The task force has not met or provided any additional information to complete this brochure at this time.

- WVCDHH has coordinated with FEMA and other state agencies to support deaf individuals impacted by recent floods in seven counties, with a primary focus on the severe damage in Lewis County.
- Deaf Awareness Day 2027 will be held on Friday, February 19, 2027, with inclusion of vendors specializing in technology for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities. We will continue seeking additional vendors and volunteer support to help with the event.

Board Member Reports

- Dawn Embrey-King
  - She provided updates for the West Virginia Advisory Council. The end-of-the-year meeting was held, identifying K-12 public school services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students as a primary focus area.
  - The Council addressed specific concerns including teacher preparedness, service provider training, confidentiality of student IEPs, and a lack of accessible interpreting services for extracurricular activities. This information is sent to the West Virginia Department of Education.
- Crystal Law
  - She reported that the Division of Rehabilitation's financial situation has improved.
  - She also shared her experience attending the ASL program at the West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, facilitated by Marshall University.
  - She suggested a potential partnership between Gallaudet University and the Small Business Administration to assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals in becoming small business owners.
- Jennifer Casto
  - The Outreach division at WVSDB has been rebranded as Public School Partnerships. Although the title has changed, the division's duties, responsibilities, and commitment to providing services remain the same.
  - She provided a recap of the first Educational Interpreter Summit held on July 22 and 23, 2026, which received positive feedback. A second summit for July 2027 has been approved and planning is underway.
  - She introduced "Ready, Set, Drive," a new program offering ASL-supported driver's permit preparation. The program is managed by Rachel Lanham, and a demonstration will be presented during the November board meeting.
  - She announced a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new administration building memorial on August 27, 2026. The event will include a fundraiser selling bricks and memorabilia salvaged from the old administration building.
  - She confirmed that the "Hands Up West Virginia" program will continue. They are currently seeking approximately 10 deaf role models to feature in the upcoming year's episodes.
- Gloria Hollen
  - She expressed concern regarding recent reports of potential public school closures in West Virginia due to funding shortages. She highlighted the potential negative impact on deaf children who rely on consistent language access and mainstreaming services, noting that school closures could cause these students to fall behind.
- John Burdette
  - He reported that the interpreter task force is pausing meetings until September to focus on developing digital technologies and infrastructure, with plans to pilot these tools by 2027.

- He met with Doug Hess from The Arc to discuss establishing a unified emergency resource or hotline, aiming to improve accessibility and safety for the disability community.

Future Meeting Dates

- November 5, 2026 – Romney, WV
- February 18, 2027 – Charleston, WV
- May 7, 2027 – Moorefield, WV

Adjournment

John Burdette made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Meegan Wolfe seconded. The motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.