

The State of Illinois
**Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Commission**

**“To Assure Equality, Respect, Independence
and Accessibility for All Individuals with a
Hearing Loss.”**



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History

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission was established by the Illinois General Assembly in 1997 through Public Act 89-680. Eleven Commission members were appointed in November 1997 and held their first meeting in February 1998. The Commission office began operation in November 1998 and is located in Springfield.

Commission Members

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission is composed of eleven members appointed by the Governor. To qualify for such appointment, their position, knowledge, and experience enable them to reasonably represent the concerns, needs, and recommendations of deaf or hard of hearing persons. By statute, a majority of the members must be deaf or hard of hearing.

Service Policy

No person shall be denied services from the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission on the basis of race, creed, sex, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, type of hearing loss, or mode of communication.

Mission Statement

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission is an executive agency of the state dedicated to lobbying and promoting the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. In addition, the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission will serve as conduit of information to the deaf and hard of hearing communities, general public, legislators, governmental agencies, service providers, organizations, and private entities.

Vision Statement

All individuals, regardless of age, with hearing loss shall be able to live their lives and pursue their dreams free from barriers that cause a lack of functional equivalence and deprive individuals of access, opportunities, and respect as a citizen. The State of Illinois will be fully accessible and barrier-free society that fosters acceptance and respect for all deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Value Statement

To provide effective, efficient and impartial leadership, education, advocacy and services to eliminate barriers that will assure equality, respect, independence, and accessibility for all individuals with a hearing loss.

Advocacy

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission provides a wide range of advocacy services and assistance to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, their families, and other interested parties. The Commission strives to empower individuals affirming their indisputable right to equality, respect, independence, self-sufficiency and accessibility to society.

Public Policy Advocacy - IDHHC advocates on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing individuals on various issues to promote equality and accessibility for citizens with a hearing loss before the state legislature, state agencies, public and private entities and organizations. The Commission participates in regulatory and policy-making processes such as drafting legislation, promoting passage of legislation, testifying on proposed legislation, and commenting on proposed rules. The Commission serves as a conduit of information by communicating issues of importance to deaf and hard of hearing individuals and participating in boards, councils and committees.

Self-Advocacy - The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission empowers deaf and hard of hearing individuals by educating citizens with a hearing loss, their families, and other interested individuals of their rights. By providing personalized, one-on-one technical assistance on applicable state and federal laws and case-appropriate options, IDHHC offers strategies that allow individuals with a hearing loss to advocate for themselves and remove barriers to a full and accessible society.

Individual Case Advocacy - IDHHC will advocate on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing individuals if their efforts of self-advocacy have failed to resolve a discriminatory situation. IDHHC will intervene by making appropriate contacts to resolve the issue on behalf of the individual by educating the discriminating party, providing necessary documentation concerning laws, regulations, obligations, and suggesting appropriate accommodations and strategies to resolve the issue. In the event that IDHHC cannot resolve the issue, we will inform the individual of their rights to pursue their complaint formally to the appropriate state or federal enforcement agency. IDHHC assists in filing a formal complaint and will coordinate with the enforcement agency to resolve the complaint.

IEP Advocacy - IDHHC will provide assistance and advocacy to parents and guardians of deaf and hard of hearing children to ensure the child's rights in the process of developing an Individual Education Plan. An IDHHC representative may attend IEP meetings at the request of the child or parent to assure the child receives both appropriate accommodations and appropriate education.

Public Awareness

Since deafness is a low incident and invisible disability, the general public is mostly unaware about the issues involved with hearing loss. Increased awareness about deafness reduces the stigma associated with it. As the general public begins to understand deafness and its related issues, deaf and hard of hearing individuals experience less discrimination. Barriers are broken down. The Commission administers an intensive public awareness campaign to educate the public about deafness and various issues relating to hearing loss.

Exhibits - IDHHC participates in various exhibits throughout the state, including the Illinois State Fair and Duquoin Fair that inform the public about Commission services, hearing loss and other related issues.

Mandates

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission Act (20 ILCS 3932/25) defines the duties and responsibilities of the Commission, its members, director and staff. Following is the full text of Commission's legislative mandates.

Develop a program to inform persons who are deaf and hard of hearing and the public of the State and local services available for the deaf and hard of hearing and make available other information of value to families, professionals, and citizens working or involved with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Cooperate with public and private agencies and local, State, and federal governments to coordinate programs for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Provide technical assistance and training support to start and enhance existing programs and services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Evaluate State programs delivering services to deaf and hard of hearing persons to determine their effectiveness and make recommendations to public officials about future financial support to continue existing programs and establish new programs.

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.

Recommend legislative changes to the Governor and General Assembly and follow and evaluate laws affecting persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Promote cooperation among State and local agencies providing educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Establish policy related to evaluation, certification, licensure, and training standards of sign language interpreters; monitor the courts' use of interpreters provided from an approved list; and serve as a resource by providing a listing of qualified interpreters upon request to legislative bodies, public and private agencies, and persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

"Deaf people can do anything except hear"

- I. King Jordan

Workshops and Training - IDHHC provides workshops and training to deaf and hard of hearing individuals and to the general public on many topics related to hearing loss. The workshops are designed to educate, share information and answer questions so that the audience can leave with increased knowledge, and a better understanding and appreciation of issues relating to hearing loss. The workshops are tailored to suit the needs of the audience. IDHHC staff provide workshops or training in the following themes:

- Overcoming Communication Barriers
- Diversity/Cross-Culture Training
- Deaf Awareness/Deaf Culture
- Appropriate Accommodations
- Individuals' Rights
- How to Advocate
- IDHHC: Who are We and What Do We Do?
- Assistive Technology
- Effective Communication
- How to Use an Interpreter
- Parent Education/IEP/IDEA
- How Government Works
- Employer's Obligations
- Obligations of Service Providers

Information Series - IDHHC has developed an information series to educate the public about hearing loss entitled *Everything You Wanted to Know About Deafness...But Were Afraid to Ask*. Titles in the series include such topics as Hearing Loss, Hearing Aids, CART Service, Illinois Relay, How to Use a TTY, Cochlear Implants, How to Use an Interpreter, Assistive Technology, and Assistive Listening Devices. The information series continues to expand and more titles will be added in the future.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) - IDHHC promotes its programs and services through public service announcements to be used in a television and radio campaign. These fifteen-second and thirty-second announcements are intended to educate a wide segment of the population about issues relating to hearing loss.

Information and Referral

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission provides information on all aspects regarding deafness to both hearing and deaf/hard of hearing populations. IDHHC can refer an individual to appropriate resources for additional services and/or information at local, state and national levels.

Consultation - IDHHC provides guidance and expertise from the staff on a variety of issues that assist individuals with everyday situations that impact their lives as a result of their hearing loss.

Technical Assistance - IDHHC provides information, materials and technical assistance regarding accessibility, assistive technology, effective communication and appropriate accommodations for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We inform the public of service providers' obligations and how to work with or how to make your facility accessible for deaf and hard of hearing clients and employees. IDHHC provides specialized workshops on communication needs assessments, policy development, purchasing assistive technology equipment and how to contact interpreters or CART services.

Symbols



Volume Control Telephone



Sign Language Interpretation



Assistive Listening Systems



Teletype Device (TTY)



Deaf, Hard of Hearing



Closed Captioned

Resources

The Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission has a variety of resources relating to hearing loss that are available to the public.

Resource Directory - IDHHC maintains a statewide directory of programs and services available for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, their families and interested individuals at local, state and national levels.

Lending Library - IDHHC maintains a resource library of more than 1,000 books and videotapes on a variety of topics such as educational issues, interpreting, sign language, deaf culture, history, and language, cochlear implants, hearing aids, deaf/blind, cued speech, technology, and parent information. These materials are available for loan, free of charge to people interested in the subject of deafness and hearing loss. Return postage is paid by the Commission.

On-Site Information - IDHHC maintains a wide variety of reference material including newsletters, magazines, encyclopedias, and sign language dictionaries that are not available for loan. They can be viewed and copies made at the Commission office. The Commission also has a computer with Internet access for public use and online research.

Interpreter Directory - Sign language interpreters are required by the Interpreters for the Deaf Act (225 ILCS 442) to register with IDHHC. The Commission maintains a complete statewide list of interpreters. If you need an interpreter and do not know who to contact, we will provide you a list of interpreters in your area.

There are an estimated 1,000,000 individuals with a hearing loss in the state of Illinois.

Communication

It is the intent of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission to communicate to the general public, legislators, governmental agencies, service providers, organizations and private entities the statewide concerns, issues and events related to hearing loss with the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Newsletter - *The IDHHC Insider* is a free quarterly newsletter providing updated information to the public regarding the Commission's activities. Please contact the office if you want to subscribe the newsletter.

Listserv - The Commission has an e-mail bulletin board service, IDHHC-link, available to any person or organization. You may enroll in this free service to begin posting and receiving electronic mail relating to hearing loss. To subscribe to IDHHC-link, simply send a blank e-mail message to the following address:

join-IDHHC-link@listserv.idhhc.state.il.us

Once we have received your request, an automatic confirmation message will be returned to you indicating the terms of membership. You must reply to this message to activate your membership. Failure to reply will cancel your subscription request. After replying to the confirmation, a second automated message will be returned to you welcoming you to the service and giving you brief instructions for using IDHHC-link. You will then begin receiving all messages posted to the Listserv by members and may post messages yourself by sending an e-mail message to: IDHHC-link@listserv.idhhc.state.il.us

Website - IDHHC maintains an interactive and comprehensive website. IDHHC provides updated information about our programs, services, and publications. The site also features links to sites that we have visited and found to be informative and worthwhile.

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