



LOUISIANA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF

Board of Commissioners

July 11, 2025 9:00am-1:00pm

Meeting Minutes

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Dr. Natalie Delgado, Chairperson, at 9:02am
- II. **Invocation/Silent Pledge**
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. **Roll Call & Introductions:** Dr Natalie Delgado, Chairperson
 - A. Members Present: Dr. Natalie Delgado; Sherry Powell proxy for Aaron McGee; Leslie Knowles; Jamar Ennis; Dr. Megan Wimberly; Meredith Jordan; Senator Caleb Kleinpeter; Marissa Ramos; Rosalind Dotson; Sherry Crosby, Dr David Martin proxy Nancy Rawls. 11 present, quorum is established
 - B. Not Present: Dr. Ashley Argrave, Cammy Gaspar, Brad Wellons, Bethany Jackson, Melissa Bayham, two vacant positions: Hard of Hearing and Deaf Representatives.
- V. **Mandate Review:** Chairperson reviewed RS 2351-2355 and Title 67
- VI. **Public Comment:**
 - A. Bruce Dunn- Introduced himself as the new Support Service Provider (SSP) Program Coordinator at the Affiliated Blind of Louisiana
 - B. Angela Lentini- Thanked the board for allowing her to participate in the Louisiana Deaf Leadership Development (LD2) Program. Stated she had frustration with lack of protactile skilled interpreters to work with DeafBlind clients. Suggested training be provided by Nicole Alleman and Lajune (name missed). Commissioners Ramos and Wimberly responded that the DeafBlind Advisory Committee is taking note and will discuss at their next meeting.
 - C. PJ Broussard- Discussed the importance of the board doing research and learning more about issues prior to voting based only on information discussed during the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD) meetings.
 - D. Jackie Broussard- Reported she was happy about the growth and direction for DeafBlind clients. Clients now have more than just SSPs; they have tactile interpreters and deaf interpreters. Recommended consideration for a “communication facilitator” who can support DeafBlind individuals with business and/or personal issues over the phone. A communication facilitator is a mix

between a SSP and a tactile interpreter. Commissioner Wimberly mentioned that the Relay Administration Board, which she is a member of, has also discussed this topic.

VII. Approval of Agenda

MOTION 1 to accept: (Kleinpeter, Ennis) None opposed, agenda approved.

VIII. Approval of Minutes

MOTION 2 to defer: (Knowles, Crosby) Discussion- Several typos and recommends the motions be numbered. In addition, requests minutes be sent to Commissioners two weeks prior to the meetings. None opposed.

IX. Old Business

A. Proposed Rules for American Sign Language Interpreters- Notice of Intent Update

1. Interim Director Jana Broussard provided an update on the status of the Notice of Intent, which was published on May 20, 2025. This also signaled a public comment period. The Department of Health received three written comments, and seven requests for a public hearing. The department also received several written requests after the due date, which were not accepted. Typically, a public hearing is required by a total of 25 or more requests. The department chose to host a public hearing voluntarily, to ensure the public had another opportunity to express their recommendations and/or concerns. The public hearing was held on June 26, 2025 at 10:00am and closed at 10:50am, and the Department continued to receive public comments via email until close of business. As of June 26, 2025 a total of 15 public oral and written comments were received. Of the 15 received, four of them were duplicate comments. A total of 34 community individuals, inclusive of professional interpreters, deaf community members and the general public, attended the public hearing, including five department representatives from the Commission for the Deaf, Office of Public Health, and the Department of Health and five individuals providing communication access, such as sign language interpreters and captionist. Eight individuals spoke orally during the meeting. As of today's date, the department is drafting their final response.

B. Strategic Planning. See Powerpoint

1. State Fiscal Year Report 2021-2024

a. Interim Director Jana Broussard reported on activities from the Commission's strategic plan from fiscal years 2021 through 2024. See handout.

- i. 2021- Developed organizational new Mission, Vision, and Values
- ii. 2021- Developed and released new Strategic Plan 2021-2024
- iii. 2022- Act 128 was passed which modernized the Commission's legal mandate ([Louisiana Revised Statute 46: 2351-2355](#))
- iv. Strategic Priorities

a) Establish Interpreting Standards and

Systems

- i) Consulted Innivee Strategies to facilitate a statewide needs assessment to inform new interpreter standards.
- ii) Hired new Interpreter Program Manager.
- iii) Interpreter ad hoc committee defined and recommended new standards for interpreters working in PreK-12 educational settings.
- iv) Interpreter workgroup defined and recommended new standards for interpreters working in general/community settings.
- v) Developed and implemented a statewide interpreter mentor program to support interpreter skills and development (Pilot complete).
- vi) Developed and released an online interpreter registry.
- vii) Defined a grievance policy and process for interpreter services.

(Experienced technical issues- recess called by chair at 10:10am. Meeting room had to be changed. Reconvened in new meeting room at 10:26am)

b) Enhance Community Engagement

- i) Developed formal partnerships with organizations statewide
- ii) Hired new media staff position.
- iii) Created new website.
- iv) Improved social media communications.
- v) Established new logo and brand.
- vi) Engaged community directly through focus groups, surveys, town halls, open forums, and conferences.
- vii) Developed first Louisiana Deaf Leadership Development Program (one cohort completed).
- viii) Engaged Volunteer Louisiana to provide Community Emergency Response trainings in six regions of the State of Louisiana.

c) Modernize Telecommunications

Equipment

- i) Updated and strengthened service processes.
- ii) Streamlined distribution via Regional Service Centers.
- iii) Provided for access to updated equipment.

d) Address Mental Health Gaps in

Services

- i) Added Office of Behavioral Health designated seat on the Board via Act 128.
- ii) Provide direct interpreting services funded by the

Commission for mental health services such as Alcoholics Anonymous, independent therapist, and mental health conferences, trainings, and workshops.

- iii) Board created a mental health workgroup
- e) Racial Disparities
 - i) Developed formal Partnership with New Orleans Black Deaf Advocates.
 - ii) Prioritized community engagement with the black, indigenous and people of color community groups.
- f) Ongoing Support for DeafBlind
 - i) Added first DeafBlind representative seat on the Board via Act 128.
 - ii) Released program's first Request for Proposal.
 - iii) Engaged with DeafBlind taskforce for contract requirements.
 - iv) Board created DeafBlind Advisory Committee.
 - v) Developed new service delivery processes.

2. Overview for State Fiscal Year 2026

- a. Develop new strategic plan for State Fiscal Year 2027-2029
 - i. Be on the lookout for ways to participate in strategic planning
- b. Provide Cohort 2 Louisiana Development Leadership Development Program.
- c. Provide first full cohort year of the Statewide Interpreter Mentorship Program.
- d. Begin researching new areas of focus. These may include: resources for parents and families with deaf children, pregnant women and mothers who are deaf, resources and support for children and youth who are deaf, senior citizen care and deaf education.

X. New Business

A. LCD Sub-Committees-Updates from established sub committees and creation of new committees

1. Interpreter Advisory Committee

MOTION 3: (Knowles, Crosby): to create an ad hoc committee responsible for determining objectives, goals, and membership criteria for a future Interpreter Advisory Committee. None Opposed

- a. Volunteers for this committee included a representative from Louisiana Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and Commissioner Sherry Crosby.
- b. Dr. Delgado encouraged members of the public who are interested in joining to contact Interim Director Broussard.
- c. The ad hoc committee allows up to 9 participants

2. Board Bylaws Committee

MOTION 4: (Crosby, Knowles): To establish a bylaw committee to draft new bylaws for the board. None Opposed

- a. Volunteers included Commissioner Sherry Crosby

3.Executive Committee

- a. This committee is being established via rule. (Current Notice of Intent in progress). Committee includes the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of the Board Additional updates will be provided during (b) on agenda.

4.Mental Health Workgroup

- a. Marisa Ramos- Reported that she previously worked with Sajata Varner from the Office of Behavioral Health. The workgroup has drafted a list of topics for the group to address. Reported that the workgroup has not yet defined an approach for recruiting new members. Requested ideas from the public. Rosalind Dotson will be taking Sajata's place due to her resignation.

5.DeafBlind Advisory Committee

- a. Dr Megan Wimberly- DeafBlind Advisory met on July 9, 2025.
 - i. Proposed that the Commission to find a neutral party to provide training in the state of Louisiana on(1) DeafBlind awareness (2) DeafBlind self-advocacy (3) Conflict Resolution

MOTION 5: (Ramos, Crosby) to accept Dr Megan Wimberly's proposal for training as suggested. None opposed.

- ii. Proposed that the Commission and Louisiana Rehabilitative Services (LRS) continue developing Vocational Access Provider (VASP) services for job related searches. This includes identifying appropriate funding and developing program policies for the LRS manual. This topic was approved at a previous board meeting and members agreed that is a topic that this committee should continue to address.
- iii. Proposed researching the terminology between Co-Navigators (CN) and Support Service Providers (SSP) for DeafBlind. This includes developing a survey or method for collecting community feedback on the title CN or SSP. Survey should include collecting data on the need for protactile training.

MOTION 6: (Crosby, Ramos) For the Commission to invest in research for appropriate terminology for providers working with DeafBlind clients, and for investment into survey or other methods of collecting data directly from DeafBlind clients related to this terminology and need for protactile training. None Opposed

- B. Executive Director for LCD- Board received program information on leadership structure; review job description. See PowerPoint.

- 1. Interim Director Broussard provided a proposal for establishing the historical Executive Director position as an unclassified position within state government. This proposal is a result of several recommendations from consultants Innivee Strategies and from workgroup and adhoc board members over the last several years. This includes input from the d/Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing (DDBHH) communities' desire for the Executive Director to advocate on their behalf, which includes informing laws and policies that impact, DDBHH communities. See PowerPoint. Discussion from board included budget impacts, pros and cons of unclassified position

MOTION 7: (Crosby, Dr. Wimberly) to request the Louisiana Department of

Health and the Civil Service Commission to change the Executive Director position to an unclassified position. None Opposed

C. Vote for Vice Chair

MOTION 8: (Ramos, Knowles) Nominate Sherry Crosby as Vice Chair of the Commission. Crosby accepted nomination. None Opposed.

XI. Public Comment

- A. Dan Arabie (via recorded video) made a recommendation to increase the telecommunication tax for the deaf from \$0.5 to \$0.25 each month.
1. Sherry Crosby agreed with the recommendation.
 2. Senator Kleinpeter commented that he would research this in legislation. He stated that it seems current legislators are not in support of an increase in taxes. Justification would be needed to explain the need for the increase and how the money would be spent.

XII. Reports from the LCD Director: Interim Executive Director Jana Broussard. See PowerPoint.

- A. State Fiscal Year (SFY)2024: total revenue was \$3.6 million
- B. SFY 202: total revenue was \$3.7 million
- C. SFY 2025: current revenue, as of 07/11, shows a reduction to \$2.97 million f
Reported that it is possible that not all revenues have been collected.
- D. Expenditures for SFY 2025 will be approximately \$3.05 million. The state fiscal year is in close out, so this number will increase.
- E. Jazmyne Lemar provided updates on the mentorship program. See Powerpoint-. Last year, the pilot program included 8 participants and the focus was on interpreters working in education settings. For the current year cohort, LCD has received 32 applications to date. Applications are open to interpreters working in education and community settings. The program will accept up to 25 mentees/participants. Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of mentors (five) providing support to mentees. The Commission also partnered with Idaho State University through a project called Promoting Equity in Healthcare for Interpreters (PEHI). Three Louisiana citizens participated in this mentoring project, which included 25 interpreters from across the nation. A special thank you to the Department of Education who has committed \$25,000 to the mentorship program every year for the last three years to support the training of interpreters working in education settings. The Pilot program expenditures were \$29,612.04. The budget for the mentorship program for SFY2025 is \$90,598.
 1. Question from Leslie Knowles
 - a. How are participants selected, and what about those not selected?
 - i. Alternative resources will be provided for those interested in participating, but not accepted into this cohort. Participant selection is based on program criteria.
 - b. How is completion of the mentorship program measured?
 - i. Participants must be in good standing. They must have completed the entire cohort training. Mentors report on their progress throughout the year.
 - c. Are there pre and post assessments?
 - i. Yes, there are pre and post assessments for all participants.

- F. Interim Director Broussard provided an update on the Request for Proposal-Support Service Provider Program. Still in review by the Office of State Procurement.

XIII. Reports and Announcements from LCD Board Members

- A. Dr Wimberly: Shared her concern with deaf and DeafBlind professionals receiving high quality interpreting services during the required workshops/trainings. She specifically spoke about the trainings provided by the Department of Education. She would like to see the Commission partner with the Department of Education to provide trainings on providing equitable communication access for employees during professional development and training provided by the Department.
- B. Sherry Crosby: Reported that the Louisiana Association of the Deaf (LAD) hosted their conference in New Orleans this past weekend. Many awards given to members of the community, including the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf for the work that has been done with sign language interpreter standards and services. Gave a big thank you to the Commission!
- C. Dr Delgado: Shared that she serves on the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Advisory Council and wants to consider ways the LCD Board can share strategies with EHDI on how to make significant change and progress in the same way LCD Board has. This includes more engagement and involvement from people who are deaf. Stated that there is only one deaf member on the EHDI board right now. Encouraged deaf individuals to become more involved with the work of EHDI. The next meetings are July 25th from 12:00pm-2:30pm (unsure of location) and October 24th. Please contact Dr. Delgado if need more information.
- D. Nancy Rawls- Proxy for Special School District/ Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) - Commended the Louisiana School for the Deaf as their scores have increased and student LEAP continues to increase. She also all volunteers for helping get the campus ready for students. Gave kudos to LSD staff and Dr Delgado, the school's Executive Director.

XIV. MOTION 9 Adjourn 1:02 pm by Chair. Dr. Natalie Delgado (Crosby, Rawls)