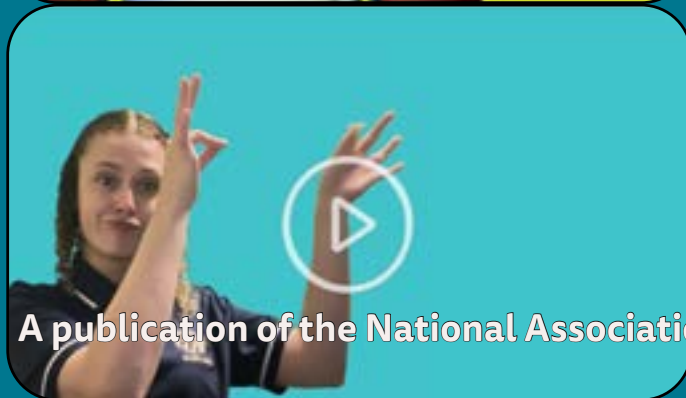


# NADmag

Winter 2025 | Volume 25, Issue 1



## ASL & English



A publication of the National Association of the Deaf



The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) was established in 1880 by deaf leaders who believed in the right of the American deaf community

to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level.

These beliefs remain true to this day, with American Sign Language as a core value. As a nonprofit federation, the mission of the NAD is to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and

linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America. The advocacy scope of the NAD is broad, covering the breadth of a lifetime and impacting future generations in the area of early intervention, education, employment, health care, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, and more. For more information, visit [nad.org](http://nad.org).

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For information about the NADMAG and more, please see page 4.

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## Mission Statement

To preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America.

## About the NADMAG

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# Reflecting on Our Progress & Looking Ahead

## NAD State of the Union



by Lisa Rose and  
Bobbie Beth Scoggins

URL: <https://youtu.be/njyMmMXCH00?si=yMidVYBVjzbFtZEm>

As we reach a significant milestone in our organization's journey, we are excited to reflect on the past six months and share our plans for the future. The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) continues to grow and deepen its commitment to serving our diverse deaf and hard of hearing communities.

### Our Recent Journey

The past six months have been transformative for the NAD. We have implemented major organizational

changes to improve our efficiency and better meet the needs of our community. A key achievement has been streamlining our processes and structures, ensuring we are well positioned to address both current and future needs.

Our Board has also undergone a renewal, strengthening our connections with priority committees and section members. This focus on collaboration will allow us to better address the diverse needs of our community.

Additionally, we have maintained a strong presence in key locations. In late September, we held our first quarterly board meeting in Portland, Maine, marking a new chapter in our governance approach.

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In October, we returned to Portland to participate in the first-year remembrance of the tragic mass tragedy, in which some of our deaf people were killed, standing in solidarity with our community during this difficult time.

In December, we conducted significant meetings with leaders in Washington, DC, strengthening our advocacy networks and partnerships.

In January, we held a second quarterly board meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah where we covered financial and board governance policy issues and met with the deaf and hard of hearing community in a town hall meeting hosted by the Utah Association of the Deaf.

## Looking Ahead

The next six months hold great promise, with several exciting initiatives on the horizon:

### Enhanced Communication and Engagement

We are modernizing our digital presence with a complete redesign of our website as well as our database. Starting in February, we launched an innovative new NADMAG in both ASL and English formats, ensuring accessibility for all community members. This digital transformation will enable us to share more detailed reports from

our priority committees and coverage of community events nationwide.

### Leadership Development

Following our April Board meeting in Ohio with the Ohio Deaf Association, we are introducing a new approach to our National Leadership Training Conference by partnering with two prominent nonprofit organizations. This hybrid platform will make leadership development more accessible than ever before. Additionally, we are actively preparing for two crucial youth-focused events: the Youth Leadership Camp in Salem, OR and the Junior NAD Conference in Santa Fe, NM.

"Your involvement is essential to our success."

### Community Connection

We are expanding our community engagement efforts significantly. Through regular Communiques and our new NADMAG,

we will keep you informed about our progress, initiatives, and opportunities for involvement. Our priority is to ensure transparent communication and active participation from all community members.

One of our key advocacy efforts is the Communications Video Technology Accessibility (CVTA) Congressional Bill, designed to make video communication technology accessible to all, including individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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Your opinion matters! Sign on to support the CVTA Bill and ensure that video technology is accessible to everyone! <https://www.cvtaaccess.org/cvta>.

## Commitment to Progress

These initiatives are just the beginning of our renewed commitment to the deaf and hard of hearing community. We know that true progress is made when we stand united, with shared determination and purpose. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our mission to advance advocacy, foster our civil rights, and build a stronger, more inclusive community.

But the NAD cannot do this alone. Your involvement is essential to our success. Each one of you, every action, and every piece of feedback helps drive the change we all need. Together, we can create a world where the deaf and hard of hearing community is heard, respected, and empowered.

Join us in shaping the future. Stay engaged, stay involved, and let's move forward, stronger and more connected than ever before. Stay connected with us through upcoming Communiques, on social media, and in the NADmag, for the latest updates and ways to get involved. The future is ours to build — together. ■



**Lisa Rose**  
President of the NAD



**Bobbie Beth Scoggins**  
Interim CEO of the NAD



## Join Us!

Your involvement and financial support as members will help the NAD to accomplish many things including:

- Protect our civil rights, including legal, employment, and educational rights.
- Promote increased communication access, including technological, visual media, and telecommunications accessibility.

Just three of the benefits of membership are:

- Representation at the federal and national level on legislative and government issues;
  - Member-only email communiques, 2x/mo.
  - Subscription to the revitalized *NADmag*, now fully digital with articles in both ASL and English. Published 4x a year.
- [nad.org/join/](https://nad.org/join/)

# NAD Leadership Training Conference

Austin, Texas • October 29–November 2, 2025



NAD Conference  
June 28–July 4, 2026  
San Francisco, CA







# From Lawsuit to Everyday Access

## Interpreters at the Biden-Harris White House

by Elsie Stecker

URL: <https://youtu.be/sPV1zEVTvcs>

To tell you the truth, when I first saw Press Secretary Jen Psaki with a hearing ASL interpreter, I had a strong intuition that I was supposed to be interpreting her press briefings. At that time, I could not explain why — I just knew it was something I was meant to do. If you ask me now, I know what it was. It was a calling from above to serve.

I also remember it was a time when almost everyone I knew advocated and demanded a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) to be on the screen. This was never a solo effort but a collaborative effort from both deaf and hearing interpreters,

the deaf community, and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD).

### It began with a lawsuit during COVID-19

It all started on August 3, 2020 with the lawsuit filed by the NAD and Arnold & Porter on behalf of five deaf individuals against the Trump-Pence White House for failing to provide life-saving information in sign language about the COVID-19 pandemic. The US District Judge James Boasberg granted temporary relief requiring the Trump-Pence White House “to include in-frame ASL interpretation, already adopted by the governors of all 50 states in their COVID-19 video broadcasts.”

Judge Boasberg’s ruling applied specifically to the White House. The

*continued on page 10*

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White House was expected to share their video feed with an ASL interpreter to the TV networks, however, the networks were not required to carry the interpreter feed. The ruling marked a turning point for access and inclusion. It sent a clear message that deaf Americans mattered when millions were dying during the pandemic. Despite that fact, the attorneys with the Trump Administration at the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed an appeal to try to overturn the ruling. The Trump-Pence White House's denial of access for deaf ASL Americans to life-saving information cost taxpayers \$225,000.

## Inclusion. "...every White House briefing..."

When the Biden-Harris Administration took office they settled the lawsuit and provided ASL interpretation for the COVID briefings. They then took their commitment to inclusion even further — on January 25, Press Secretary Jen Psaki

announced that "...as part of its accessibility and inclusion efforts, every White House briefing will now have a sign language interpreter." It was a breakthrough that we all fought for so hard.

Despite very few networks choosing to carry the interpreter feed on their end, all of the press briefings, conferences, and remarks with principals (President, Vice President, First Lady, Second Gentleman, and Press Secretary) were live-streamed with ASL interpreters and posted on their social media accounts.

The position that I later filled, as an on-screen CDI, was a surprise bonus. The Biden-Harris Administration issued a policy that they were committed to ensuring effective communication for all of their briefings. However, the Biden-Harris Administration went a step further by listening to the signing deaf community. They recognized the need for a CDI to be on the screen and made it a reality.

## My North Star

My job requires me to interpret the message that I am given into a language that is most accessible to the broadest ASL-using audience possible. From my first day to my last day, I have always visualized my dear deaf family and my audience. Everyone reaps benefits from watching CDIs on the screen. I prioritized those who cannot rely on captions to understand what is being said. They became my North Star, guiding my work.

It was not always an easy journey. Even after my FBI interview, it took weeks for speechwriting teams to give us what we needed. We reiterated our need for prep materials in advance to them. They were ordinary people doing extraordinary things daily, and they had minimal or no exposure to working with interpreters. They also spent years cultivating their relationships with Joe Biden when he was Vice President. It was a tight-knit circle that we were trying our best to support

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in a meaningful way. Our relationship slowly evolved, and we became one team, writing and signing for the President and the White House.

We conducted in-house training with different stakeholders on best practices for working with ASL interpreters and together we updated internal ASL and CART policy. We started with a blank canvas and we slowly built a strong foundation for access and inclusion. It took us almost a year and a half of advocating for an additional interpreter team because they were not aware of industry standards such as switching every twenty minutes. We provided documents and research by scholars to justify the additional team.

## High-stress, high-stakes

That was the hard part. But it turned out that the hardest part of all was interpreting their press briefings — this was a whole new ballgame. We

had no way of predicting what questions will be asked and each press briefing was unique. It became challenging when reporters sparred with the Press Secretary and tried to bait her into answering something that could make or break their career. It was a front row seat watching democracy at work. All of this was happening in real-time within a fast-paced environment with limited information. It was not a job for everyone, but I loved and thrived in this environment.

Due to the nature of the high-stress and high-stakes environment, it was essential to team with competent certified hearing interpreters (CHIs) who excelled under pressure. My expectations are high because access to information is deeply personal to me. The deaf community deserves the best, nothing less.

I have had the utmost privilege of teaming with two seasoned hearing interpreters, Lindsey Snyder and Jennisey Basart, along with other contractors during my

tenure. They are what I call unsung superheroes.

In their minds, they are able to simultaneously:

- 1.) understand the point and context behind the speaker's message,
- 2.) translate from spoken English to ASL,
- 3.) monitor us (CDIs) by breaking down our ASL into English in their heads to ensure the intent of the message is accurate,
- 4.) listen and retain new information from the speaker, and
- 5.) repeat from the first step.

Because a lot of the information contained implicit knowledge that had to be made explicit when translating into ASL, I was also required to keep abreast of current news, read relevant books and articles, meet with experts to discuss complex topics, and research appropriate sign choices. I also checked in with members of the deaf community frequently to ensure the messaging

*continued on page 12*

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was being received accurately.

Both Lindsey and Jennisey brought their strengths to their interpretation. Along with me as a “real-time editor,” we strived to deliver the speaker’s message at the highest level of diplomacy from one language to another.

## An American thing to do

It was a long and arduous process from where we began, to where we are today. With the Biden-Harris Administration, we see a functional government that provides access and prioritizes inclusion. Deaf Americans can see themselves

working and serving in the US government. By the end of the term, five Gallaudet University alumni at the White House were working in different capacities.

It was a remarkable change from the lawsuit demanding access to delivering immeasurable impact on many deaf Americans.

My young deaf children and their friends have become accustomed to seeing CDIs interpreting for the President of the United States, setting a precedent. Another breakthrough occurred on October 1, 2024, when the Department of State announced they would begin utilizing CDIs for their briefings. It was a significant

step toward building an inclusive country where all Americans feel valued and included — especially my young deaf children and their friends.

I am forever honored and humbled to complete the collective mission by becoming the first Certified Deaf Interpreter to be hired by the White House. It was a historic moment for both deaf and interpreting communities, regardless of anyone’s political views. It reflects how far we have come. This is the legacy we have created, and we must remain vigilant and continue to advocate for access and inclusion because it is an American thing to do. 🇺🇸

<https://www.courthousenews.com/judge-orders-white-house-to-include-sign-language-in-covid-briefings/>

<https://www.arnoldporter.com/en/perspectives/news/2021/12/nad-reaches-settlement-with-white-house>

<https://www.nad.org/2020/08/03/nad-sues-white-house/>

<https://www.nad.org/2021/02/01/nad-applauds-asl-access-at-all-white-house-briefings/>

Settlement agreement: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mwbUw5WOPMMheYGEwxZSqfU\\_hZ2twOBk/view?usp=drivesdk](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mwbUw5WOPMMheYGEwxZSqfU_hZ2twOBk/view?usp=drivesdk)

<https://www.state.gov/deaf-inclusion-for-the-state-department-press-briefing/>

<https://clearinghouse.net/case/17798/>



**Elsie Stecker** is a Certified Deaf Interpreter. You can follow her on Instagram and YouTube at @SteckerInterpreting.

# Recent Attacks on Section 504

by Kelby Brick



URLs: <https://youtu.be/SmEdyM4Pmu4?si=D8wTfePu52w-qIEC>  
— and — <https://youtu.be/Txh9VljWlh4?si=fjPL8SBNMEzweUgM>

*These two articles were originally published on the social media pages of the NAD. We are re-publishing them here for wider distribution to our members and stakeholders. Subscribe to our social media channels at YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@nad1880>, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NAD1880>, and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nad1880/#> for quick updates on NAD activities.*

**February 14, 2025**

The threat against Section 504 has surfaced recently, with many people discussing it online, and on social media. You have also been contacting the NAD. We have received three general areas of questions, which are:

1. What is happening with Section 504?
2. What will the NAD do about this threat?
3. What can the community do to support our work?

This video will address all three questions.

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**THE SITUATION BEGAN** when the Attorney Generals (AGs) of 17 different states sued the Federal Government, asking a judge to declare Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act unconstitutional.

Section 504, in a nutshell, prevents anybody that receives federal funding from practicing unlawful discrimination. This is important — when my friends, family, or I go to hospitals, schools, or any other place that receives Federal funding, they must provide us with interpreters, captioning, and other forms of accommodations and access. They cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. If they are hiring, they must treat applicants the same as non-disabled individuals.

## Section 504 — Part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Over 50 years ago, discrimination against individuals with disabilities was widespread. Congress recognized that this was happening in the Federal government, and also in the States. State governments and organizations refused to protect deaf and hard of hearing people (and other disabilities). As a result, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. One of the sections of this Act was Section 504. After passing this act, the Federal Agencies were required to develop rules that detailed specifically how to implement and follow these laws. For several years, the Agencies refused to develop rules — meaning that discrimination continued.

Finally, in 1977, deaf and hard of hearing people led protests, along with other people in the disability community. One of these protests took over the Health, Education, and Welfare Building (HEW) in Washington, D.C. Other protests occurred all over the United States. These protests were led by the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, which was founded by a Deaf man, Dr. Frank Bowe. He is now known as the father of Section 504. He worked closely with the National Association of the Deaf, which at that time was led by Fred Schreiber.

Fred was a valued and highly respected mentor of many deaf lawyers and advocates over the years; I was fortunate enough to be one of his mentees, and I am grateful for that opportunity.

As a result of these protests, HEW finally published rules that defined discrimination against deaf, hard of hearing, and other people with disabilities. Our deaf and hard of hearing community led this fight, and we won this fight.

## Disability Redefined

Over the years, the Federal government has continued to revise the definition of “disability,” in order to define who is protected by these rules. Recently, the Federal government included gender dysphoria in that definition.

As a result of this addition, 17 states objected, and they decided to sue the Federal Government in Federal court.

The court case is named Texas v. Becerra. They argue that gender dysphoria should not be included — but they also have gone one step further, and they are asking the Court to find that the entire Section 504 is unconstitutional. Needless to say, the NAD feels that this argument is without merit, and we do not support their efforts to get rid of Section 504.

## Why We Need Section 504

If Section 504 was to go away, a number of important civil rights that deaf and hard of hearing people now enjoy would also disappear. Some have said that the Americans with Disabilities Act is “enough,” and Section 504 is not needed. However, the ADA does not apply to Federal employees, and employees of other organizations such as the United States Post Office.

A few years ago, in 2020, the National Association of the Deaf sued the White House in order to force them to make their press briefings accessible to deaf people — we needed them to make the information accessible in American Sign Language. The NAD won that lawsuit; the underlying legal argument for that was based on Section 504.<sup>1</sup> There are many other examples of successful litigation for the civil rights of deaf and hard of hearing people that are based on Section 504. At this time, we are working closely with other disability organizations. We are all encouraging our members, our stakeholders, and our allies

<sup>1</sup> See related articles on pages [11](#) and [25](#)

to contact their state Attorney Generals — especially those in the states that are parties to the lawsuit — and ask them to stop attacking Section 504. We need YOU to be involved in this effort, and to write to your AG, and ask them to stop. The Becerra case is harmful to you and your community and should be withdrawn.

### YOU MIGHT BE WONDERING WHY

the NAD isn't involved in the court case at this time. Normal legal practice is for organizations like ours to not be involved until the first decision has been made; when the case is appealed, then we can get involved in the judicial process.

That does not mean we are not doing anything. We are actively engaging and collaborating with lawyers and advocates from other disability organizations, discussing the best strategies for preventing these Attorney Generals from taking away Section 504, which would remove a large swath of civil rights from deaf, hard of hearing, and other disability groups. These organizations are also mobilizing their memberships, stakeholders, and allies to contact their Attorney Generals.

**IT IS CRITICAL THAT YOU WRITE TO YOUR ATTORNEY GENERAL**, especially if you are in one of these 17 states. Our friends at the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) have published a webpage that has some fantastic information, including how to contact your

continued from page 15

Attorney General, and what your letter should say. Here is the website info for DREDF: <https://dredf.org/project-504>.

In addition to writing letters, the NAD needs your help. We encourage you to join the NAD, and also consider donating. An increased membership, and increased donations, will give us more resources to fight these legal challenges, and other attacks on the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing people. You can join the NAD at [nad.org/join/](http://nad.org/join/).

The NAD is fighting for you. We will continue to fight. We need your help.



**Kelby Brick, Esq.**

Chief Operating Officer, NAD

We will continue communicating with you as this, and other, situations evolve.

Thank you for taking action and thank you for your support.

---

**UPDATE:**  
**TEXAS V. BECERRA**  
**February 20, 2025**

Hi! Last week, I told you all about the Texas v. Becerra case, where 17 states asked a federal judge to declare Section 504 of the Rehab Act unconstitutional. We asked you to contact your state Attorneys General to tell them to drop the case and to protect Section 504.

I wanted to give you an update! You all did make a difference!

Yesterday, the 17 states in conjunction with the US Department of Health and Human Services filed a joint status report to the court. This means they wrote a letter to the judge to update about what is

happening with the case and when/how it will proceed. The government asked the judge for more time to decide how to proceed in light of the president's executive order about "gender ideology."

## The Big Win

And here is the big win: due to tremendous pressure from our community, the Attorneys General told the judge that they are NOT asking for Section 504 to be declared unconstitutional!

Wow! You caused them to backtrack! Your efforts made a difference!

But, we should still remain vigilant. Please understand that the states are backtracking and disclaiming what they originally filed. We will continue to monitor their actions closely to ensure that they don't go back to what they originally filed.

Congratulations and good job! THANK YOU! We will continue to keep you posted! Together in unity, we make a lasting impact. 🍌





# Empowering Deaf Seniors

## How DSA Creates a Vibrant Community for All

by Sherri Collins

URL: <https://youtu.be/HD6b948WFK8>

At Deaf Seniors of America (DSA), we're more than just an organization — we are a vibrant community of Deaf seniors who refuse to let age dim our spark. Whether you're facing the challenges of aging or seeking a community that understands your needs, we're here to help. One of the best ways we support you is through our Resources section, offering extensive listings tailored to Deaf seniors.

I am thrilled to announce that I have recently joined DSA as its first Executive Director! I bring a passion for serving the

Deaf senior community and a commitment to advancing our collective needs. Together, we'll continue to grow and build upon the work the DSA has been doing for years. I look forward to leading DSA into this next exciting chapter.

### Representation: Advocating for You

I am committed to ensuring that Deaf seniors are heard at all levels — local, state, and national. Our advocacy efforts are focused on securing equal access to services, addressing needs from healthcare to housing, and fighting for your rights. I encourage you to join us in this mission, as we work to ensure that Deaf seniors live with dignity, independence, and the support they deserve.

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In collaboration with the NAD and its Senior Citizens Section, DSA ensures that the needs of Deaf seniors are represented at the national level. This partnership helps us secure vital services, advocate for policy changes, and address the unique needs of our community.

### Resources: Housing, Services, and Advocacy

Our online Resources section, a joint endeavor with the NAD Senior Citizens Section, is a comprehensive guide to essential services for Deaf seniors. It includes state-by-state listings of:

- Assisted Living Facilities
- Independent Living and Residential Facilities
- Nursing Facilities
- Specialized Facilities
- Social Clubs and Organizations
- State Agencies and Commissions

I encourage you to explore these listings at [www.deafseniors.us/resources](http://www.deafseniors.us/resources). We continue to expand this content, so please check back frequently for

updates. For additions or corrections, please reach out to Lance Fischer, DSA Board Member, at [lance.fischer@deafseniors.us](mailto:lance.fischer@deafseniors.us).

### Networking: Connect, Share, and Thrive

Our biennial national conferences are an important part of DSA's mission to bring together Deaf seniors from across the country. These events provide an opportunity for learning the latest information and resources, sharing experiences, and cultivating friendships. I invite you to join us this summer for the 2025 DSA Conference, August 1-8, 2025 in Kansas City, Missouri. For more information, visit [www.deafseniors.us/2025-conference](http://www.deafseniors.us/2025-conference).

### We're Here to Welcome You

At DSA, we believe that life is an adventure at every age. I'm committed to making sure we continue to thrive as a community. Whether you're seeking housing, social connections, or vital services, we're here to support you.

### Ready to Embrace Your DSA Adventure?

Join DSA today to access the resources, support, and community you deserve. Let's connect to empower and uplift the Deaf senior community together! 📌



**Sherri Collins**

Sherri Collins is the Executive Director of Deaf Seniors of America (<https://www.deafseniors.us>). She previously led the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (1998–2025) and held leadership roles at the North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Gallaudet University Regional Center. She holds a B.S. from Gallaudet University and an M.Ed. from North Carolina State University. [execdir@deafseniors.us](mailto:execdir@deafseniors.us).



# A Legacy of Advocacy

## Celebrating Marc Charmatz's 48 Years with NAD

by Nancy Bloch

For nearly half a century, Marc Charmatz has been a cornerstone of advocacy for the deaf and hard of hearing community. As Attorney Emeritus with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Marc's dedication to ensuring equal rights, access, and opportunities has profoundly shaped the legal landscape for accessibility and disability rights. From landmark court cases to mentoring the next generation of advocates, Marc's career exemplifies a life of service to others.

"I truly believe that, over my 48 years at the NAD, I have had the most interesting public service career, serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals," Marc reflects.

### The Early Years:

#### A New Path with NCLD and NAD

Marc's journey into disability rights law began in an unexpected way. Before joining the NAD, he worked at a private law firm specializing in labor law. In late 1976, Marc saw a job posting for an attorney position with the National Center for Law and the Deaf (NCLD) Legal Defense Fund. This position, funded by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and located on the campus of Gallaudet

College (now Gallaudet University), focused on legal advocacy for the deaf community. Motivated by a desire to do more federal litigation work, Marc applied for the job and became the NAD lawyer with the NCLD team, working from a small trailer on Gallaudet's campus.

When Marc was hired, he met Frederick C. Schreiber, the first Executive Director of the NAD. During their first meeting, Fred asked Marc why he wanted to leave private practice for the NAD.

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Charnatz (right) with University of Maryland Law Students at the Supreme Court, 2008/9

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Marc's response was clear: "I want to file complaints and represent deaf and hard of hearing individuals." Fred's enthusiastic reply — "That is exactly what I want you to do" — set the tone for Marc's decades of impactful work.

"Soon after I started work for Fred, we changed the name to the NAD Legal Defense Fund to reflect the fact that the NAD was responsible for paying for this position," Marc recalls. "Many people thought that because I worked at Gallaudet that I was a Gallaudet employee. That has never been the case.

While I had many friends at the NCLD, I have always been an NAD lawyer." Marc soon became a trusted advisor to Fred and other NAD leadership, reporting on litigation developments and collaborating closely with the entire organization.

"When a lawsuit was filed, I would go to the NAD to meet with Fred and inform him about the complaint. And when the case was resolved — whether through a decision or settlement — I would report back with the outcome. Fred was deeply interested in litigation and always encouraged the filing of new complaints."

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Marc reflects on his tenure as NAD Legal Director from 1977 to 2002, emphasizing the power of collaboration. “For 25 years, our law and advocacy efforts were always a team effort,” he explains. “From 1977 to 1996, we worked closely with Gallaudet’s NCLD attorneys. After the NCLD closed, we carried that same spirit of teamwork forward with the dedicated attorneys at the NAD. None of our achievements would have been possible without the collective efforts of these talented legal teams.”

## Landmark Cases and Defining Moments

During Marc’s time as Legal Director, the NAD tackled numerous cases that dismantled systemic barriers for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Many of these cases involved the refusal of government agencies, schools, employers, and healthcare providers to provide auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication. These efforts spanned multiple arenas, including education, employment, healthcare, and public services.

“Each complaint that the NAD filed was important not only to the individual plaintiff, but to the deaf and hard of hearing community as a whole,” Marc explains.

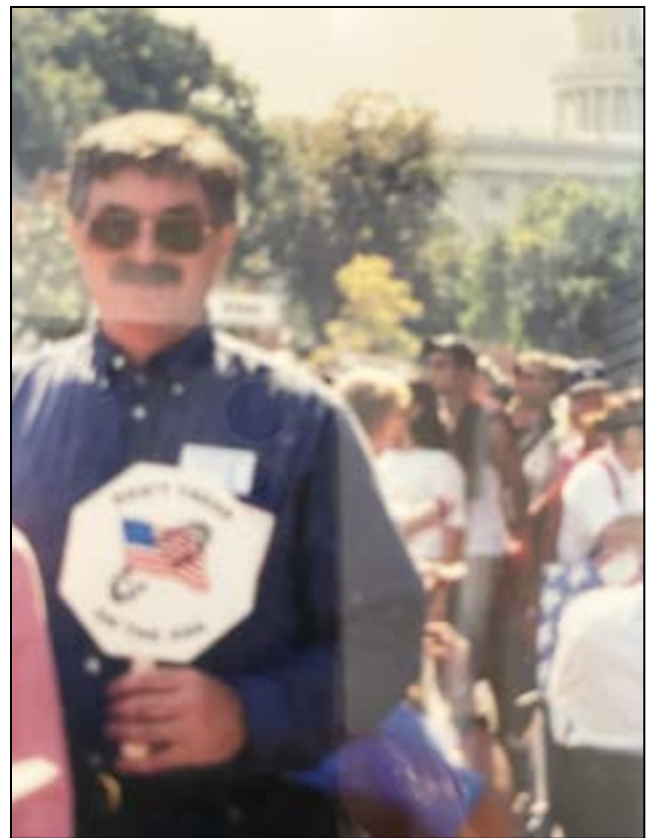
Perhaps the most challenging cases, Marc recalls, were those where defendants argued that individuals could not succeed in certain roles because they were deaf. These cases covered a wide range of professions,

including medical students, law students, forklift drivers, package car drivers, electricians, and teachers.

“Deaf and hard of hearing individuals can do anything, and there was a great deal of satisfaction proving this in court,” Marc says. The NAD and Marc have played a vital role in the history of disability rights.

But the journey has not been easy. The NAD served as co-counsel in what may have been the first case filed after the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare issued the initial Section 504 regulations. In that case, a federal court ruled that a college must provide sign language interpreters to ensure effective communication between a deaf student

Charmatz at 2002 demonstration for ADA



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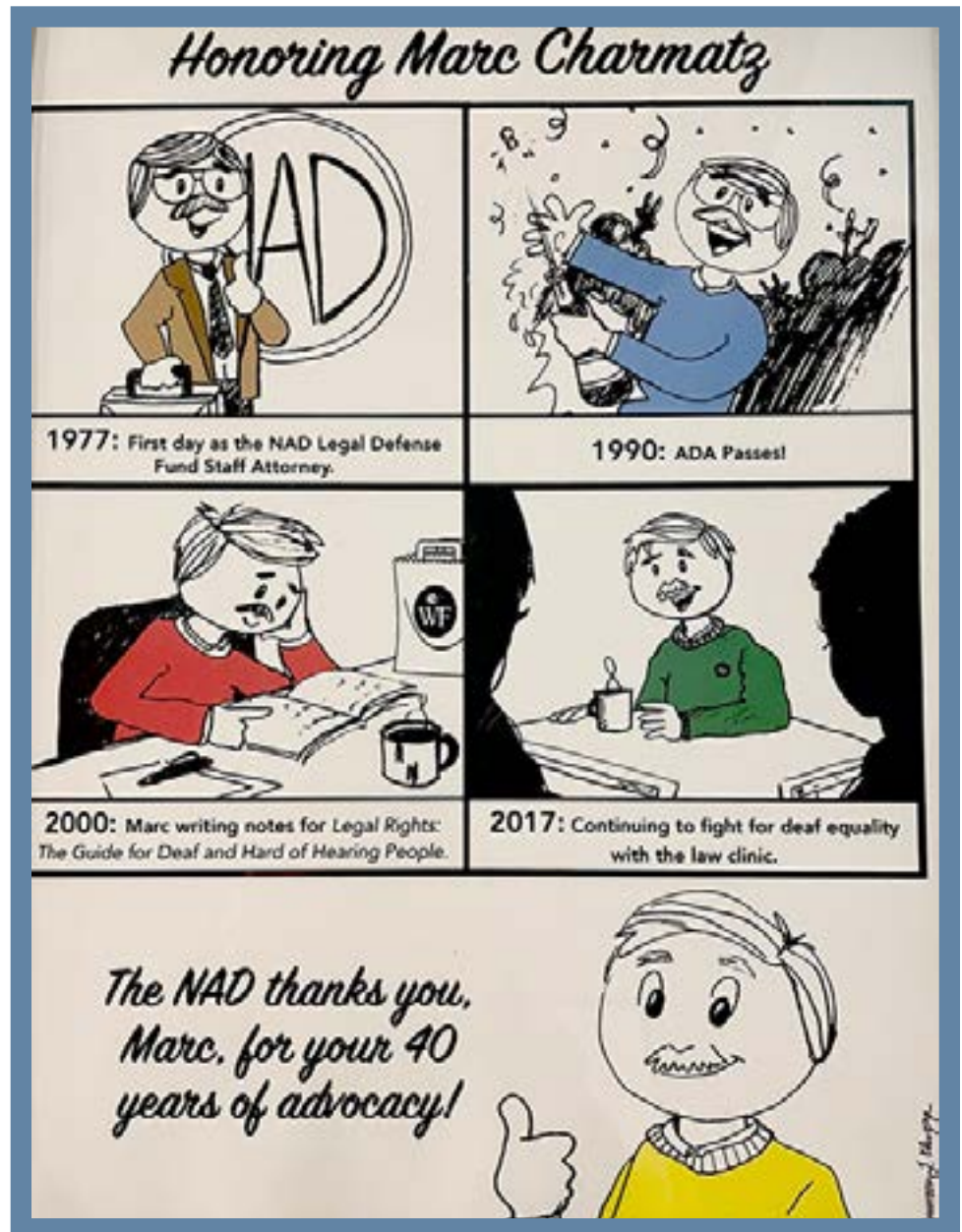
and her professors. See *Barnes v. Converse College* (1977).

The NAD served as co-counsel in the first United States Supreme Court case involving Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. See *Southeastern Community College v Davis* (1979). The case examined whether a professional school could impose physical qualifications for admission to clinical training programs. The Supreme Court upheld a lower court's ruling, which found that the plaintiff, a licensed practical nurse, was not qualified to enroll in a registered nursing program at a community college due to her hearing loss.

"This was undoubtedly a low point," Marc recalled. "But over time, the undeniable qualifications of deaf and hard of hearing professionals have paved the way. Today, deaf individuals are thriving in various medical fields, including as doctors and nurses."

The NAD served as co-counsel in the second Section 504 case to reach the United States Supreme Court. This case

involved a deaf student who had been granted a preliminary injunction by a lower court, requiring a state university to provide sign language interpreters to ensure effective communication between the student and his professors. While the Supreme Court initially agreed to hear the case, it later dismissed it as moot because the injunction had already expired.



Cartoon by Maureen J. Kluz

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See *University of Texas v. Camenisch* (1981).

The NAD served as co-counsel in what may have been the first jury trial involving Title II of the Americans with

Disabilities Act. In this case, a deaf student was expelled from a university's teacher education program — not for her academic performance, which was excellent, but because of her deafness. The university cited safety concerns and claimed the student would be unable to teach music, but a jury disagreed, awarding the student \$189,000 in damages. Marc recalled, "That was a day I will always remember. Our client proved to the jury that she had the qualifications to be a teacher, and the jury agreed." See *Grantham v. Moffett* (1996).

Most recently, the NAD served as co-counsel in *Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools* (2023), a landmark United States Supreme Court case in which the Court ruled 9-0 that a deaf student could seek monetary damages under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act for discrimination he suffered while enrolled in public school without any qualified sign language interpreters. And the NAD served as co-counsel in *NAD v. Trump* (2021)<sup>1</sup>, in which a federal court ordered that sign language interpreters appear on-screen when the President and other officials within the



Office of the President delivered remarks during the COVID crisis. "Expanding legal rights is what it's all about, and these cases did just that," said Marc. "Both cases serve as excellent examples of how private attorneys and the NAD can work together to achieve a highly favorable outcome. I am honored to have served as co-counsel in these cases and the many, many other court decisions that have impacted the lives of our clients and the deaf and hard of hearing community."

Marc also played a role in advancing access to entertainment. "When I first started at the NAD, commercial television was not accessible, and only a limited number of public TV programs were captioned. Movies were also largely inaccessible," he recalls. Over time, however, television became more accessible, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the NCLD and NAD. While Marc was not co-counsel in *NAD v. Netflix* (2011), that case proved to be a game-changer, setting a precedent that established captioning as a standard across streaming platforms and beyond. The success of that case was made possible by Marc's foundational

<sup>1</sup> see related stories in this issue, page 11 and 17

work on numerous other cases that paved the way for this landmark case.

“There is no going back on access,” Marc says proudly.

These victories, Marc emphasizes, were the result of collaboration. “Litigation is a team effort involving great clients, support from the NAD, wise co-counsel, and experts,” he explains. “We’ve also been fortunate to serve as co-counsel with some of the best private law firms across the nation — it has been incredibly valuable to have these lawyers on our side in fighting for change.”

## Mentorship and Community Impact

Beyond litigation, Marc has been deeply committed to mentorship and education. For 20 years, he served as an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, where he taught and co-taught the Civil Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Clinic. This role allowed him to involve law students in real-world cases at the NAD, giving them hands-on experience in public interest law.

“I very much enjoy mentoring student attorneys, interns, and new attorneys,” Marc says. “I encouraged these individuals to consider careers in public interest and disability rights.”

“Marc’s legacy is one of collaboration, advocacy, and tireless work.”

The NAD has been fortunate to employ both deaf and hearing attorneys funded by the Skadden Foundation and Equal Justice Works. As a result of their work at the NAD, these attorneys have gone on to have distinguished careers in disability rights. “They all got their start at the NAD, and it has been incredibly satisfying to watch them succeed,” said Marc.

In 2002, Marc transitioned to senior attorney with the NAD. Kelby Brick, a deaf attorney with the NAD

Law and Advocacy Center, took over as the new Legal Director. “I had the distinct honor of serving as the NAD Legal Director for 25 years, but I always remembered that the NAD is an organization where deaf individuals make the decisions,” Marc shared. “So, I was thrilled when Kelby became the new Legal Director.”

*“Marc’s leadership and unwavering commitment to the NAD have shaped the path for so many, including myself. Taking on the role of Legal Director was both an honor and a responsibility I carried forward with the same dedication to advancing the rights of the deaf community. Marc’s legacy is one of collaboration, advocacy, and tireless work, and I am proud to continue that mission in service of our community.”*

— Kelby Brick  
NAD Chief Operating Officer

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Marc takes pride in sharing both the successes and the challenges of his career. "It's rewarding to pass on lessons learned — both the successes and the times when we did not accomplish all of our goals," he reflects. His advice to aspiring attorneys is simple yet profound: Treat clients with respect. Know not only the statutes, the regulations, and the case law, but know the clients. Learn to work as a team."

## A Personal Journey

Marc's work at the NAD has not only shaped the lives of countless individuals but also deeply impacted his own. "I did not know any deaf individuals before I started working at the NAD," he reflects. "To be a part of the deaf and hard of hearing community has been a very important part of my life."

His career brought him into contact with many lawyers and advocates within the broader disability rights community. Marc attributes much of his professional fulfillment to the kindness and support of the deaf and hard of hearing community, the leadership of eight different NAD executive directors and chief executive officers, and the camaraderie of his colleagues. He is the only attorney to have worked with all eight of these leaders,

each contributing to his journey and the continued success of the organization.

"The kindness of the deaf and hard of hearing community, the steadfast support of NAD leadership, and the lasting friendships with NCLD and NAD attorneys are the main reasons I stayed with the NAD," he shares.

Over the years, Marc has been honored with the NAD Civil Rights Breakthrough Award and the NAD Chief Executive Officer's Award for Exceptional Dedication and Commitment in Supporting the NAD and its Mission. An edition of *The Legal Rights: A Guide for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People*, authored by NCLD, Marc, and NAD

attorneys, was dedicated to him. Additionally, a painting by deaf artist Susan Dupor, *The NAD: A Growing Democracy*, holds a special place in Marc's home.

“As a lifelong advocate with a true deaf heart, his legacy has paved the way for others to build upon and take further.”

## Looking to the Future

As Marc reflects on his career, his focus remains firmly on the future. "The coming

years will be dedicated to ensuring that the hard-earned legal rights stay intact and are enforced," he says. "This is no time to rest on our victories. We need the energy and wisdom of new attorneys to continue protecting these legal rights."

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Marc also cherishes his family, who have supported him throughout his remarkable career — his wife, Betty; their two children, Kim and Brian; Brian's wife Meghan, and three grandchildren; Caleb, Elias, and Oliver.

"Together with the NAD family, I have been most fortunate," Marc says, reflecting on his deep appreciation.

## A Lasting Legacy

Marc's contributions to the NAD and the broader disability rights movement are immeasurable. From dismantling barriers in education and employment to ensuring access to entertainment and public services, his work has transformed the lives of countless individuals.

To young attorneys just beginning their careers in advocacy, Marc offers this advice: "Be committed. The work is challenging, but the rewards of serving the community are profound."

As the NAD celebrates Marc Charmatz's

extraordinary career, we are reminded of the power of dedication, teamwork, and compassion in advancing justice. His legacy will continue to inspire advocates, attorneys, and communities for generations to come.

*"Marc lives and breathes the NAD in everything he does — his dedication is unwavering. As a lifelong advocate with a true deaf heart, his legacy has paved the way for others to build upon and take further. Once an advocate, always an advocate. We at the NAD are grateful that Marc continues to be a part of our team as Attorney Emeritus, offering his invaluable expertise and dedication."*

— Bobbie Beth Scoggins  
Interim NAD Chief Executive Officer

Thank you, Marc, for 48 remarkable years of service. You have shown the world that deaf and hard of hearing individuals can achieve anything — and your work has paved the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.

*"Thank you to the deaf community, the NAD, the NCLD and NAD attorneys, our clients, and the many student attorneys who have contributed to our work. Being married to Betty for 52 years and serving as an NAD attorney for 48 years has truly been an incredible honor and privilege."*

— Marc Charmatz  
NAD Attorney Emeritus. ■



**Nancy Bloch**

Nancy Bloch served as the CEO of the National Association of the Deaf from 1992 to 2011 and as the Executive Director of Communications and Public Relations at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind from 2012 to 2021. She is currently a freelance consultant, specializing in nonprofit policy and organizational strategy.



# Does Your Geography Limit Your Options?

## Challenges Deaf People Experience

by Aubrie Bauer

URL: <https://youtu.be/0NuHYpGMyz4>

As a senior graduating this May from Gallaudet University, I want to share my experiences with geographic limitations that restrict educational and professional opportunities for deaf individuals. By "geographic limitations," I refer to the systemic obstacles that deaf students face when pursuing opportunities outside regions that offer sufficient accessibility and accommodations. Unlike their hearing peers, deaf students often have far fewer choices when selecting colleges, universities, or career paths because they must prioritize "deaf-friendly" institutions and workplaces. This article will highlight how these geographic limitations impact the deaf community and constrain opportunities.

I first encountered these limitations as a high school senior. My dream was to attend Jacobs University in Bremen, Germany to study international politics and business, but financial aid was critical for this to happen. Unfortunately, my Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

counselor informed me that they could not support my choice because it fell outside Maryland's geographic funding restrictions. Under Maryland's VR policy, known as "cost-effectiveness," funding is prioritized for in-state institutions or schools with established

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accommodations for deaf students. While this policy is designed to maximize efficiency, it inadvertently forces deaf students to choose from a narrow pool of options, such as in-state colleges or universities, Gallaudet, or Rochester Institute of Technology — often at the expense of their aspirations.

When Jacobs University was no longer viable, I turned to my second choice, Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida to study political science.

However, VR also declined to support this option, stating that adequate alternatives of studying in political science were available in Maryland, at Gallaudet University, or at Rochester Institute

of Technology. Ultimately, after a long and frustrating process, I decided to shift to Gallaudet to secure financial assistance. Although Gallaudet is an outstanding institution and I was blessed to experience many things, it was not my first choice, and I felt compelled to attend due to circumstances beyond my control.

My experience is not unique. A friend of mine faced similar challenges with the same policy in California. He was accepted to a university in Rome, Italy, but faced a prolonged battle with his VR counselor

in California. Eventually, he discovered a loophole: the university was partially funded by American sources, making him eligible for VR support. Despite this victory, his dream of studying in Rome was cut short. After one year, he found it increasingly difficult to continue due to inadequate accommodations. For example, he could not secure an ASL interpreter for his classes and had to rely on Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), which was exhausting

to follow for long periods. Ultimately, he returned to the US and pursued a degree at Gallaudet. This was another example of how geographic limitations forced him to compromise on his aspirations and settle for something he never wanted in the first place.

*"...deaf people often find themselves limited to institutions and careers that meet their accessibility needs."*

Now, four years later, I am facing similar challenges as I consider pursuing a Master of Arts degree. My options remain limited to Gallaudet, RIT, or institutions in Maryland, despite my desire to explore opportunities elsewhere. Many deaf students share this experience, feeling restricted in their educational options by VR's geographic funding policies. While these policies may be well-intentioned, they unintentionally create barriers, preventing deaf students from pursuing their desired paths.

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These geographic limitations extend beyond education and into career choices. Many deaf individuals gravitate toward "deaf-friendly" jobs, such as roles at deaf schools, Gallaudet University, or organizations that prioritize accessibility. For instance, my friend who left Rome chose Gallaudet partly because he knew finding a job in Italy would be far more difficult due to a lack of accommodations. Similarly, when I asked some of my peers about what kind of things they consider when looking for jobs, or colleges they want to live or attend, many of them prioritize living in areas with strong deaf communities or near deaf schools to ensure accessibility for themselves and their families in the future. This indicates that they're being geographically limited to the areas that'll be accommodating and accessible to their needs.

As a result, deaf people often find themselves limited to institutions and careers that meet their accessibility needs. This forces them to weigh the tradeoffs of fighting for accommodations versus settling for fewer options that are already "deaf-friendly." These constraints hinder their ability to explore opportunities in different parts of the world and pursue their dreams. This illustrates how geographic constraints shape both educational and career decisions for deaf individuals in ways that hearing people rarely face.

As I prepare to graduate, I urge policymakers, educators, and advocates to address these geographic limitations. Reforms to the VR system could expand its reach, allowing deaf students to access opportunities that align with their aspirations rather than settle for something they did not want in the first place. Additionally, more institutions and workplaces must also commit to creating inclusive environments that offer full accessibility, regardless of location. This is to broaden the range of accessible options for deaf students and professionals to achieve their full potential, and dreams, and break free from the geographic barriers that currently hold them back. 🗳️



My name is Aubrie Bauer. I am from Frederick, Maryland. I identify as a deaf person. I am a senior at Gallaudet University, double majoring in Government and History, with plans to graduate in May 2025. I enjoy discussing politics and history, and I love to engage in debates on a variety of controversial topics. I have been a member of the Gallaudet Debate Team for three years and have served as the team's captain for two years. Additionally, I have worked at the Center for Democracy in Deaf America, starting as a student assistant and later as a Sign Vote Ambassador to ensure college students are registered to vote, and vote in the elections.

**A Movement for Change.  
A Celebration of Talent.  
A Call to Action.**

# WAWABILITY

**CELEBRATING ACCESSIBILITY,  
INCLUSION, AND IMPACT**

## THE ADA TURNS 35!

BY CHRIS WILSON

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, marking a historic step toward equality and accessibility for millions of people with disabilities. Over the past 35 years, this groundbreaking legislation has transformed society by breaking down barriers in employment, transportation, education, and public spaces. The ADA has empowered individuals with disabilities by ensuring greater independence, legal protections against discrimination, and increased access to essential services and opportunities.

To commemorate this important milestone in American history a dynamic celebration called WAWABILITY will be held this summer at The Anthem in Washington, D.C. This multi-day event will pay tribute to the ADA's past, present, and future while showcasing the incredible talent and creativity of performers with disabilities. Through music, dance, and comedy, WAWABILITY will highlight the progress made since the ADA's enactment, acknowledge the work still to be done, and inspire future generations to continue advocating for accessibility and inclusion.



### EXPLORE

Technology demos will showcase cutting-edge innovations designed to enhance accessibility and independence



### ENGAGE

Expert speakers will discuss the current state of accessibility, the progress made under the ADA, and the future innovations needed to create a more inclusive society.



### ENTERTAIN

Two unforgettable nights filled with talented performers with disabilities.

# THIS IS WHY I CREATED WAWABILITY



**Warren "WAWA" Snipe**

[CLICK FOR WAWA VIDEO](#)

For over 30 years, I've been on an incredible journey in the entertainment industry - proving that talent, passion, and determination know no limits. As an actor, rapper, dancer, martial artist, gymnast, and stunt performer with a disability, I've faced challenges, but I've also witnessed powerful moments of progress and inclusion.

I've seen barriers break, perceptions shift, and an industry beginning to embrace the immense talent within the disabled community. Too often, people simply haven't seen what we are truly capable of, and I knew that had to change.

That's why I created WAWABILITY - to inspire, uplift, and transform the narrative. Instead of focusing on obstacles, we shine a light on success, celebrating the remarkable achievements of disabled individuals in the arts, technology, education, health, government, and beyond. Our talent, creativity, and drive define us - not our limitations.

No matter what challenges you face, your voice, your dreams, and your abilities have the power to make an impact. Let's keep pushing forward, breaking barriers, and showing the world what's possible!

## AMAZING LIVE PERFORMANCES

\*Scheduled to Appear among others



SEAN FORRIES



KODI LEE



BEAUTIFUL THE ARTIST



JOSH BLUE



MANDY HARVEY

WAWABILITY will feature two nights of entertainment at The Anthem in Washington D.C. on July 11th and 12th



NINA CHILDRESS



TOM WLODKOWSKI



DR. BOBBIE BETH SCOGGINS



TONY COELHO

## INFLUENTIAL VOICES

\*Scheduled to Appear among others

Powerful conversations led by the top voices in disability and accessibility will explore the past, present, and future of the ADA while driving inclusion, innovation, and lasting change for a more accessible world



Join the Celebration. Be part of WAWABILITY2025  
Visit [www.wawability2025.com](http://www.wawability2025.com)  
For all updates regarding WAWABILITY, follow us on



# US Dept. of Education

## What Does It Actually Do?

by Sara Nović



URL: <https://youtu.be/FDHU74QDpto>

With every new Presidential administration comes a flurry of Cabinet nominees, Executive Orders, and proposed legislation. One of many hot topics relevant to our community has been discussion about the future of the Department of Education (DoED). President Trump spoke about abolishing the agency at a September 2024 rally in Pennsylvania, saying, “I’m going to close the Department of Education and move education back to the states.” In October, he reiterated the stance in a *Fox and Friends* television interview.

Since his reelection, Trump has nominated Linda McMahon, former professional wrestling business executive, to the position of Secretary of Education, leaving

the plans for the department unclear until her confirmation by the Senate.<sup>1</sup> In the interim it’s worth examining — what does DoED actually do?

The Department of Education was created by President Jimmy Carter in 1979 to perform four essential functions:

- **Overseeing and distributing federal aid funds for college students:** DoED’s biggest financial job is to oversee the dispersing of Federal Pell grants for secondary students with financial needs.
- **Collecting and sharing data, research, and training materials:** DoED conducts studies on what kinds of teaching methods are most

<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, Linda McMahon had not yet been confirmed by the US Senate. She was confirmed on March 3, 2025.

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effective for students and shares that information nationally.

- **Choosing and advocating for key national educational issues:** It's important to know that states and local school boards already control their schools' curriculums and reading materials.

However, DoED does produce some federal "Common Core" standards about things K-12 students should be able to do at a given grade level. For example: a reading standard for a first grader wouldn't dictate what books a teacher should use, but says that a student should be able to, "identify the main topic and retell key details of a text."

- **Preventing discrimination and ensuring equal access to education:** DoED

provides supplemental funding to underserved K-12 schools, known as "Title 1 schools," in situations where state and local funding has been inadequate to keep the school running.

Secondly, and likely most familiar to the deaf community, DoED disburses funds to a variety of deaf and disability-

centered programming like Gallaudet University, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, the Printing House for the Blind, the Special Olympics, and more.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) is also part of this work, providing funding and training for a variety of

special education and rehabilitation programs, as well as national standards and training for ASL interpreters. An article with more on OSERS is included in this issue of the NADMAG.

DoED also ensures K-12 students are given access to "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) by enforcing the law known as IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). DoEd also pays some IDEA-related costs through

grants, though the amount varies from district to district based on a variety of factors. Under IDEA, a disabled child is entitled to accommodation and an Individual Education Plan, or IEP. If a school violates the IEP or the child's right to education, it is with

"From the deaf perspective, IDEA is an imperfect law because its focus on placing students in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE) is sometimes misinterpreted by school districts to push for mainstream settings over deaf schools or other specialty programs."

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DoED that parents file a complaint to demand accountability.

From the deaf perspective, IDEA is an imperfect law because its focus on placing students in the “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE) is sometimes misinterpreted by school districts to push for mainstream settings over deaf schools or other specialty programs. However, in 1992, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander issued crucial supplemental guidance regarding deaf students, clarifying that the LRE should not automatically be assumed to be a mainstream classroom, and that IEP teams must equally weight, “communication needs and the child's and family's preferred mode of communication, linguistic needs, severity of hearing loss and potential for using residual hearing, academic level, and social, emotional, and cultural needs including opportunities for peer interactions and communication.” This guidance has been essential for advocates and families working to ensure access to bilingual-bimodal education programming for their D/HH children.

“Because the IDEA law would be difficult to repeal, it would likely be moved under another agency. The expertise and advocacy of lifelong educational policymakers previously employed at DoED would be lost, and critical guidance ... would likely no longer be enforceable.”

If plans to close the Department of Education are implemented, a lot would be left up in the air depending on which

programs are relocated to other agencies, and which are shuttered completely. Even for those programs relocated, the transition period is likely to be rocky.

Because the IDEA law would be difficult to repeal, it would likely be moved under another agency. Already long backlogs for complaint investigations would grow as a new department chooses whether and how much personnel and resources they will reallocate to the task. The expertise and advocacy of lifelong educational

policymakers previously employed at DoED would be lost, and critical guidance like Alexander's would likely no longer be enforceable.

Funding is also a concern. While it's impossible to predict what the new administration will choose to move or remove, given recent Executive Orders targeting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), the stated goal of seeking to

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curb spending it deems “wasteful,” and a track record of trying to defund programs like the Special Olympics, as President Trump attempted in 2017, it’s reasonable to expect procuring funds for deaf and special education programming will be an uphill battle. While deaf schools themselves are funded by the states, they do receive payment from students’ local school districts that are in part funded by IDEA grants out of DoED, so any cuts to IDEA funding will trickle down to all D/HH K-12 programming. Cuts to Title 1 funding will also harm disabled K-12 students, as schools will necessarily have to use their limited money to keep the lights on and pay teachers, rather than paying for individualized accommodations and services.

Gallaudet University and NTID also currently receive funds for their operational budgets via DoED. Gallaudet received \$165,400,000

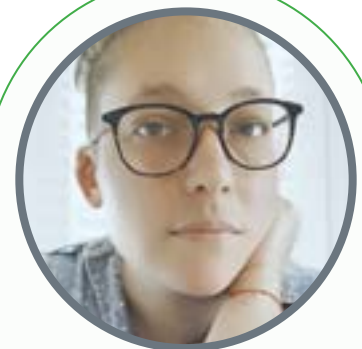
“Without the DoED, it’s unclear whether the government would continue funding NTID at all. Gallaudet’s charter offers it some protection, because the charter is legally binding and requires that Congress allocate some funds to the school.”

in 2023. Without the DoED, it’s unclear whether the government would continue funding NTID at all. Gallaudet’s charter offers it some protection, because the charter is legally binding and requires that Congress allocate some funds to the school. However, the charter does not stipulate a specific amount of money, meaning Congress could technically allot \$1 to Gallaudet and remain in compliance with the agreement.

With the administration’s rapid roll-out of new agendas, it can be difficult

to parse out what each move means, concretely for the future of DoED and other deaf and disability-adjacent agencies and programs. Secretary-nominee Lisa MacMahon’s confirmation hearing should be a rich source of information on the administration’s plans for the future of the department. As of this writing, DoED’s News and Press Release webpages were still being updated:

[https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release.](https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release)



**Sara Nović**

*Author links*

**Bluesky:**

[@novicsara.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/novicsara.bsky.social)

**Instagram:**

[@photonovic](https://www.instagram.com/photonovic)

**Newsletter:**

<http://buttondown.com/signs+wonders>



# A Tribute to Donna Morris

## Celebrating 45 Years of Dedication to the NAD

by Anita B. Farb

Donna Morris has dedicated an incredible 45 years of service to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), embodying commitment, excellence, and unwavering support. This tribute celebrates her remarkable career and profound contributions that have left an indelible impact on so many lives.

### A Humble Beginning

It all began in February 1980 when the NAD was preparing for its 100th Anniversary Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. A high school friend, who was working at the NAD, invited Donna to take on a temporary position answering phones and assisting with conference preparations. Donna stepped in and was warmly welcomed by Bill Ethridge, Ed Carney, Donna Cuscaden, Mel Carter, Edith Kleberg, and others. These colleagues not only guided her but also taught her American Sign Language, office skills, and how to use the TTY.

### Embarking on a New Career

In June 1980, Donna was offered a full-time role in the bookstore department, working alongside Barbara Olmert, who

taught her the ins and outs of bookstore management. With the guidance of Alan Porreca and Alyce Stifter, Donna quickly learned about the NAD, the deaf community, and life in general. She ultimately became the bookstore manager, which brought its share of challenges, but also immense joy.

One of the highlights of Donna's career was the excitement of publishing *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America* and collaborating closely with authors like Jack and Roslyn Gannon. Every new publication — from manuscript to final product — was a celebration of collective effort and creativity. More than 20 titles were published by the NAD during this time, and the bookstore sold a wide array of different items. The workload became overwhelming for the staff as all processes were done manually.

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### Donna Morris at work in the 1980s.

Donna, with the help of Patricia Herbold, spearheaded the transition to computerized operations, modernizing the bookstore's functions. Reflecting on this period, Donna said, "It was truly a 'sign of the times' — no more manually doing paperwork. We left it all up to the computer!"

### Transition to Member Services

By the time the NAD moved to its Fenton Street building in 2006, bookstore sales had slowed, and the focus shifted to supporting the membership department. The NAD stopped selling merchandise from other vendors and concentrated on its own titles, which were becoming outdated. By 2010, the membership department needed additional support. With help from dedicated volunteers and part-time employee Ronald Nomeland, Donna transitioned to working full-time in membership services while

continuing to manage bookstore fulfillment and advertising management for NAD periodicals and conference program books.

Managing membership and databases requires incredible attention to detail and a deep understanding of member needs — something Donna has consistently excelled at. Known for her multitasking abilities and dedication, she worked tirelessly with a series of software applications (currently undergoing overhaul) to maintain a comprehensive database of memberships, donations, events attended, and section participation. These tools have been vital for building membership, responding to inquiries, and supporting the NAD's mission to inform and engage the community.

### Going Above and Beyond

Donna's dedication often went above and beyond. She frequently brought piles of work home after long days in the office and came in on weekends to prepare for the week ahead.

Reflecting on Donna's unparalleled dedication, Vikki Porter, former Senior Graphic Designer/Marketing Specialist with the NAD, shared a heartfelt analogy:

"To make a successful cake, you need the right ingredients and must follow the instructions. Otherwise, it will fall flat. Donna, your 45 years (and some change) in supporting NAD and its mission has been a remarkable journey. To have such career

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longevity, these ingredients are a must: professionalism, determination, and steadfastness.”

Vikki continued, “You not only mixed those ingredients into a delicious dedication to the NAD, but your unwavering commitment to excellent customer service and service delivery has impacted everyone who worked with you. I count myself as one of the lucky ones on that list, and I truly enjoyed our time together at NAD. I applaud your over four decades of service and for simply being a rockstar! Salute to you and your lasting legacy!”

## Cherished Friendships and Memories

Donna also treasures the friendships she formed over the years, which have been a cornerstone of her journey. Watching coworkers marry, start families, and even welcome grandchildren has brought her immense joy. Each person, past and present, has left an indelible mark, contributing to a rich tapestry of memories.

Reflecting on her time at the NAD, Donna shared, “I have always admired

the dedicated members and donors who supported the NAD year after year. Their unwavering commitment, whether through memberships, donations, or active participation, is a powerful reminder of the organization’s impact.”

When asked what advice she would give to new employees, Donna offered this wisdom: “Get to know your coworkers — it takes a team to make a business grow. Don’t be afraid to ask questions, seek advice, listen, and learn! Just a side note, Donna added: “my first week at work, I became fast friends with a lady named Donna Cuscaden. She threatened

to put duct tape over my mouth because I talked too fast and never shut up. She always laughed and said she was grateful to be deaf so she didn’t have to hear me all day! But she loved that I asked so many questions and wanted to learn. How I loved that woman!”

## Legacy of Dedication and Impact

Donna’s career, spanning decades, has been a masterclass in communication, problem-solving, patience, adaptability, and trust. The challenges of maintaining teamwork, especially during the

““ To have such career longevity, these ingredients are a must: professionalism, determination, and steadfastness. ””

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“ Her optimism has consistently brightened our work and hearts, a reflection of the passion and loyalty she brings to her role every day. ”

COVID-19 pandemic, only underscored the importance of collaboration and connection.

Asked about Donna, Bobbie Beth Scoggins, NAD Interim Chief Executive Officer stated: "Donna's radiant spirit and dedication are at the core of NAD's mission. For 45 years, she has been a steady source of strength, commitment, and warmth within our NAD family. Her optimism has consistently brightened our work and hearts, a reflection of the passion and loyalty she brings to her role every day. We are grateful for the exceptional service she continues to provide, year after year."

Donna has also observed the shifting dynamics of membership, particularly the challenge of engaging younger generations. She admires the NAD's ongoing efforts to bridge generational gaps through social media and tailored initiatives, ensuring the organization remains relevant and inclusive. To Donna, the NAD has been more than just an organization — it has been a family, a community, and a lifelong source of purpose. From the leadership and colleagues who have made her work so rewarding to the members whose gratitude fuels the mission, the NAD has been a beacon of growth and connection.

Donna's skills, honed over decades, have proven invaluable. From managing data and memberships to working alongside dedicated volunteers, every task she undertook strengthened the NAD's bond with its members and the broader community.

Her remarkable career stands as a testament to the difference one person can make through passion,

perseverance, and an unwavering belief in the power of community. ■



**Anita B. Farb**

Anita Farb dedicated 24 years to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), serving in multiple roles from 1985 until her retirement in 2009 as Deputy Director. Throughout her tenure, she contributed significantly to the organization's mission, advocating for accessibility and inclusion. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Anita and her husband, Warren, share a passion for travel. Together, they have explored all seven continents and visited 55 countries — some more than once — embracing diverse cultures and experiences along the way.

# In Focus: Deaf Education

by Marla Hatrak



URL: <https://youtu.be/3Zx8MQmTnQY>

This is a regular feature covering all principles and activities of Deaf Education. This article is focused on early childhood deaf education ages 0-3 and covers both federal and state level legislations. It ends with one of NAD's 2024-2026 five priorities.

## Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)

EHDI is the federal law first passed in 2000 and reauthorized most recently in 2022. It mandates hearing screening of all babies before they leave the hospital. If a baby's hearing test shows potential hearing issues, the baby's family will be referred — by 3 months old — for "...appropriate audiologic and medical evaluations..." The audiologist will diagnose the baby's hearing status and, most likely, prescribe hearing technology.

By six months old, the baby should be receiving intervention services that could include a wide range of services, depending on what the family wants and needs.

When the baby is referred to receive intervention services that are provided by Part C under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the family and the professionals will develop an Individual Family Service Plan that will last till the child turns 3 years old when they switch to Part B under IDEA.

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If this is confusing to you, you are not alone. It must also be confusing for some, if not most, of the families and deaf professionals trying to navigate the federal legislative mandates.

## Issues of the EHDI?

During the first six months when families with DHH babies are referred for “audiologic and medical evaluations” by 3 months old and to receive intervention services by six months, those DHH children will have missed six months of language acquisition. Look at the very important LEAD-K language milestones that DHH children are most likely to have missed during their first six months.

### The First Year

During their 1st year, babies are watching, learning, and soaking up the language around them. Even though babies don’t always speak or sign too much during this first year, babies are absorbing all those words you sign or say to them, so be sure to talk and sign to your baby all the time!

#### 0 – 3 months

- Your baby looks around and is attentive to people’s faces.
- Your baby smiles when they see you.
- Your baby shows awareness of the environment.
- Your baby recognizes and responds to a person’s voice or to movement or light.

#### 4 – 6 months

- Your baby begins to babble with hands and/or voice. Your baby may use babbling to get your attention.
- Your baby copies your movements involving arms, head, hands, and face.
- Your baby responds to changes in the tone of your voice and/or changes in your facial expressions.
- Your baby expresses feelings by cooing, gurgling, and crying when alone or when playing with you.
- Your baby looks at you or vocalizes when you sign or say their name.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/sb210langmilestones.asp>

As a part of our political discourse, we must highlight DHH children’s language acquisition during the first six months and thereafter. Thus, it is necessary to focus on LANGUAGE ACQUISITION as the primary intervention strategy for all DHH children and their families. Their cognitive and social-emotional developments are dependent on their robust language acquisition and development. Having language skills ensures DHH children will develop the ability to communicate effectively. Ultimately, language acquisition and the eventual academic language development ensures that DHH students will accomplish K-12 academics and develop critical thinking skills.

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**Issue #1:** This is a complicated issue to outline here. From my dissertation in 2022, I suggested that the legislation does not necessarily primarily mandate the much-needed language intervention services. The EHDI law says that the intervention services include "... appropriate educational, audiological, medical, and communication (or language acquisition) ..." As most of us know, the families are more likely to request audiological and communication services for their child.

It is important to distinguish the difference between language and communication. To be able to communicate requires language skills. Acquisition services, specifically ASL and English, should be the major and primary intervention strategy for all families so that their DHH children could thus communicate.

**Issue #2:** The implementation of the EHDI law is focused on hearing technology and speech development. More needs to be done to re-focus interventional services to primarily ASL/English language acquisition services within the EHDI law and its implementation.

**Issue #3:** Implementation of EHDI law should include provisions for the involvement and guidance of deaf professionals so that the families would benefit from their Deaf Community Cultural Wealth. With our bilingual abilities, we would be able to contribute

significantly to the linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional development of all DHH children and their families. Only by amending and reauthorizing EHDI law in 2027 (or potentially earlier) can we begin to see renewed focus on ASL/English in the EHDI law, the very first law impacting deaf babies and their families.

**Recommendation for EDHI:**

We recommend amending the EHDI to re-focus on ASL/English language intervention services for all families. We also recommend the inclusion of deaf professionals.

For more information or to become involved in advocacy: email [marla.hatrak@nad.org](mailto:marla.hatrak@nad.org).

## Deaf Children's Bill of Rights (DCBR)

In preparation for a presentation at the California Educators of the Deaf (CAL-ED) in September 2024, I came across some new information about the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights (DCBR) that I had not previously realized, which actually astounded me. Eighteen (18) states already have DCBR. During the presentation, I asked members of the audience if the DCBR laws were a "valuable resource but not widely used." I did not have answers as to why the DCBR laws were not more widely applied toward deaf students within the DCBR states.

In response to my questioning, some of the audience members expressed frustration that their state wouldn't accept the DCBR; others said they were successful in convincing their administrators of the important tenets within the DCBR.

## What Is a Bill of Rights?

Before we delve into the impressive tenets within most of the 18 states' DCBR, a bill of rights is defined as:

*A summary of fundamental rights and privileges that a government guarantees to the people.*

Although we typically know the Bill of Rights as the 10 Amendments to our U.S. Constitution, there are other examples of a formal statement of rights such as for hospital patients or universal human rights.

## How can DCBR help deaf students?

The statement of purpose within DCBR is the recognition of the unique educational needs of DHH children. The two most important texts would be:

- DHH students' IEP
  - must have a language/communication (sic) plan
  - must address their rights to, and opportunities for direct communication.

Additional text would address the more common and basic tenets within most of the 18 states' DCBR such as:

- Right to associate with age and grade level peers
- Equal access and opportunities to:
  - School personnel who are language fluent and able to communicate
  - Academic programs in ASL
  - Non-academic extracurricular activities
  - School athletic programs.

### **Recommendation for DCBR:**

Check your state if they have a DCBR. Consider passing a DCBR/LEAD-K legislation. For those with a DCBR, check the possibility of using the DCBR as a legal device to ensure DHH children receive the appropriate educational environments they need and deserve.

For assistance with your state's DCBR or to become involved in your state's advocacy for a DCBR, email [marla.hatrak@nad.org](mailto:marla.hatrak@nad.org).

## Language Equity and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K)

Why does LEAD-K matter? Because of 21 state-level LEAD-K legislation, we now have, for the very first time, critically essential data from three LEAD-K states: California, Kansas, and Virginia. Data is essential for advocacy because,

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most fundamentally, statistics gives our advocates a strong foundation to build a compelling case for action.

Sheri Farinha, as the leader of the state-level LEAD-K efforts, is now spearheading a federal-level LEAD-K legislation. They are having a Deaf Leadership Summit —

Federal LEAD-K bill on April 4-5, 2025 in Bethesda, Maryland.

Here are the basic statistics from the three states; you can check their source for additional information and details.

## California: SB 210 Report for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Look at the column, **At Age Expectation** where both Deaf and Hard of Hearing children—birth to age 3 — would exhibit robust language acquisition. When they turned 3 years old, the percentages of DHH children would drop significantly (Table 4a). More important is the greater percentage drop for Literacy Domain (Table 4b).

**Table 3. Age Expectation Counts and Percentages for Language Domain (Fall 2020) for Infants/Toddlers (Birth to Age 3)**

Infants / Toddlers	Not at Age Expectation	Close to Age Expectation	At Age Expectation	Total
Deaf	1 (0.5%)	11 (5.7%)	182 (93.8%)	194
Hard of Hearing	3 (0.3%)	21 (1.9%)	1,064 (97.8%)	1,088
All Children with IFSPs Assessed	87 (2.0%)	380 (8.8%)	3,853 (89.2%)	4,320

**Table 4a. Age Expectation Counts and Percentages for Language Domain (Fall 2020) for Preschoolers (3-5)**

Preschoolers	Not at Age Expectation	Close to Age Expectation	At Age Expectation	Total
Deaf	16 (9.8%)	39 (23.9%)	108 (66.3%)	163
Hard of Hearing	17 (3.4%)	78 (15.4%)	410 (81.2%)	505
All Children with IEPs Assessed	3,566 (10.9%)	8,664 (26.4%)	20,542 (62.7%)	32,772

**Table 4b. Age Expectation Counts and Percentages for Literacy Domain (Fall 2020) for Preschoolers (3-5)**

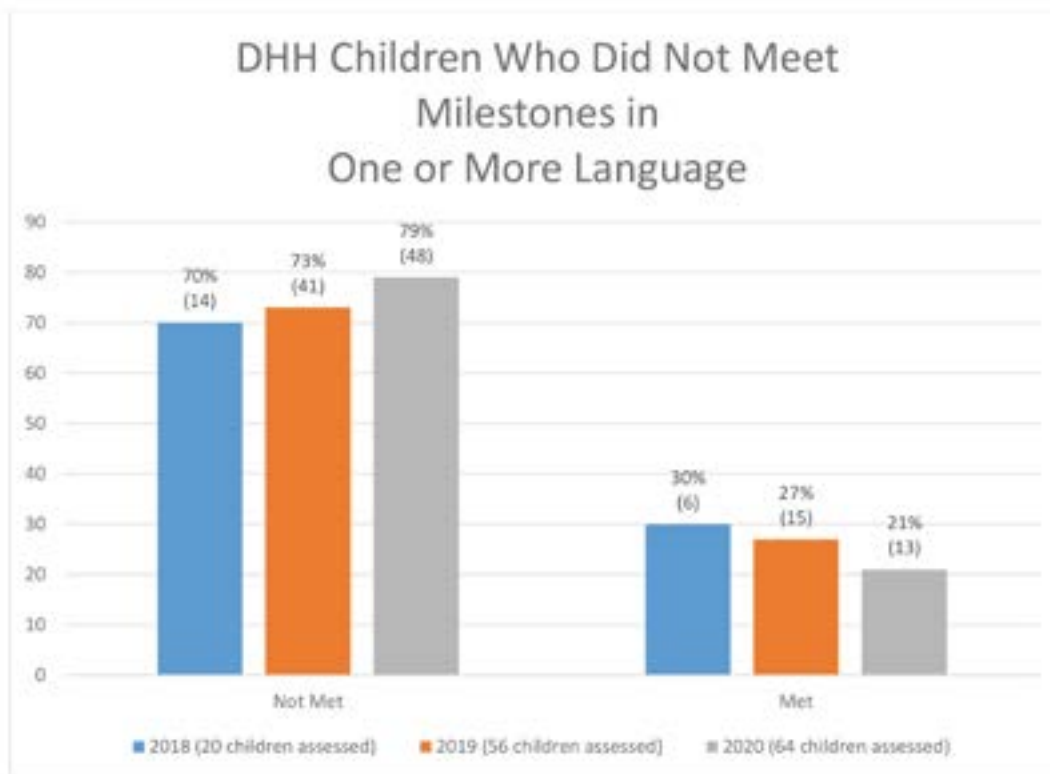
Preschoolers	Not at Age Expectation	Close to Age Expectation	At Age Expectation	Total
Deaf	49 (30.1%)	24 (14.7%)	90 (55.2%)	163
Hard of Hearing	90 (17.8%)	83 (16.4%)	332 (65.7%)	505
All Children with IEPs Assessed	10,952 (33.4%)	6,547 (20.0%)	15,273 (46.6%)	32,772

Click on the following link to get Spring 2021 data and the full report.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/documents/sb210-report-2020-21.pdf>

## Kansas: Annual Report of Language Assessment Program-Deaf/Hard of Hearing for 2020

In accordance with K.S.A. 75-5397e which created a language assessment program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.



[https://kslegislature.gov/li\\_2022/b2021\\_22/committees/ctte\\_s\\_ed\\_1/documents/testimony/20210211\\_08.pdf](https://kslegislature.gov/li_2022/b2021_22/committees/ctte_s_ed_1/documents/testimony/20210211_08.pdf)

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## Virginia: Comparison Report on Language and Literacy Development of Children with Disabilities Birth to Age Five

The following outcomes were reported by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) on the number of eligible children aged birth through three years who received Part C Early Intervention Services between July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 (93 who were Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH)). <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/56247/638580986111600000>

	Number of Children Deaf or Hard of Hearing	Percentage of Children Deaf or Hard of Hearing
a. Children who did not improve functioning	10 children or less	10 children or less
b. Children who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers	39	41.94%
c. Children who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it	17	18.28%
d. Children who improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers	10 children or less	10 children or less
e. Children who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers	27	29.03%

## Virginia: Comparison Report on Language and Literacy Development of Children with Disabilities Birth to Age Five — continued

The following outcomes were reported by the Virginia Department of Education on the number of preschool children aged three through five years, inclusive, with IEPs rated between July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 (36 students who were D/HH, including children with Deaf-blindness, in comparison to 5,840 who were Hearing).

	Number of Children Deaf/HH and Deaf-blindness	Percentage of Children Deaf/HH and Deaf-blindness	Number of Children Hearing	Percentage of Children Hearing
a. Preschool children who did not improve functioning	10 children or less	10 children or less	33	0.57%
b. Preschool children who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers	10 children or less	10 children or less	347	5.94%
c. Preschool children who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it	13	36.1%	3,432	58.77%
d. Preschool children who improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers	16	44.4%	1,872	32.05%
e. Preschool children who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers	10 children or less	10 children or less	156	2.67%

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## The model LEAD-K bill

The model LEAD-K bill has three basic and focused mandates:

- educators are to assess language development of deaf children ages 0–5
- State Department of Education to post an annual report on language and literacy development of deaf babies and toddlers
- State Department of Education to develop an informational resource for parents of language milestones currently posted on their website.

### **Recommendations:**

Check the LEAD-K model bill to advocate for your state's own LEAD-K legislation. Discuss the statistics with both your state and federal legislators.

For assistance with your state's LEAD-K or to become involved in your state's advocacy, email [sfarina@norcalcenter.org](mailto:sfarinha@norcalcenter.org). For assistance in reaching out to your state and federal legislators, email [marla.hatrak@nad.org](mailto:marla.hatrak@nad.org).

In future issues of the NADMAG, I will be addressing some additional key issues to provide a more global view of Deaf Education. If you have any topics you would like NAD to cover, please contact me via email at [marla.hatrak@nad.org](mailto:marla.hatrak@nad.org).



**Marla Hatrak**

Marla Hatrak, PhD, has a MS in Early Childhood Education with a Specialization in Public Policy & Advocacy, and a PhD in Educational Policy, Leadership, & Management. A lifelong advocate, she has been involved with local, state, & national activities advocating for signed language acquisition and English literacy for all deaf children. She was a co-founder, in San Diego, of Alliance for Language and Literacy for Deaf Children.

## Advertise in the NADMAG!

We invite you to advertise in the quarterly publication of the National Association of the Deaf. Founded in 1880, the NAD has been at the forefront of advocacy and information for all deaf and hard of hearing Americans. New for 2025, the magazine is fully bi-lingual and bi-modal with ASL versions of all articles embedded.

### **Interactive Feature:**

each advertisement will have your link embedded, so readers will reach exactly the webpage you determine.

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**For rates and other information: Donna Morris**  
[donna.morris@nad.org](mailto:donna.morris@nad.org).



# NASADHH State of the States

Serving the diverse needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind communities



by Elizabeth Hill and NASADHH Board,  
Robert Cooper ASL version

URL: <https://youtu.be/E7vrBfVrg7I>

## Trends and Challenges in Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The National Association of State Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) serves as a collective voice for state programs addressing the diverse needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind (d/hh/db) communities across the United States. From supporting language development in children to ensuring communication access for older adults, NASADHH member states tackle complex issues to enhance the quality of life for these communities. This article provides an overview of shared priorities, challenges, and trends among member states, offering insight into the collective "state of the state."

## Key Focus Areas

While member states of NASADHH actively work on many policy areas, all of which are equally important, the below themes are a snapshot of issues that states are focusing on:

### Early Language Acquisition and Development and Beyond

Many states are prioritizing early language acquisition and supports for d/hh/db children to ensure kindergarten readiness and promoting quality early intervention services. Member states are also extending language and communication access in primary schools and beyond by supporting schools for the deaf, emphasizing the right to language/communication access plans, and expanding access to qualified educational interpreters.

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## **Healthcare Access and Inclusion**

Access to healthcare remains an area of continued attention and concern for d/hh/db communities. Healthcare includes access to assistive technologies, mental healthcare, telehealth, long-term care facilities, and more. Healthcare plays a significant part in daily life at every stage of life. Systemic barriers persist, ranging from inadequate communication technology to insufficient training among healthcare providers. NASADHH member states work to address these gaps through policies and programs aimed at ensuring full ADA compliance and promoting cultural competence within medical settings.

A pressing issue is the lack of consistent access to qualified in-person ASL interpreters, particularly in emergency and medical environments. While Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) can provide a temporary solution, it often falls short in reliability and effectiveness, especially during high-stakes situations or in rural areas with limited broadband infrastructure. Advocacy efforts prioritize in-person interpreters where possible while improving the quality and accessibility of VRI services.

Additionally, there is a growing focus on culturally competent and linguistically accessible mental health services. Recognizing that language barriers often exacerbate mental health disparities, agencies are exploring innovative methods to deliver care. Integrating these gaps within broader healthcare systems requires

specialized training for mental health professionals to address the unique needs of d/hh/db communities.

Healthcare access for older adults with hearing loss is a growing need, particularly as the population ages. Programs are evolving to address challenges such as hearing aid affordability, assistive device access, and inclusivity in long-term care facilities. Access to hearing aids and other assistive devices is an essential component of healthcare.

Equitable access to healthcare includes leveraging technology such as accommodations in telehealth services. Widespread adoption of accommodations requires investment in training healthcare providers to effectively utilize these tools and engage with d/hh/db patients in meaningful ways. Programs also need to address inequities for rural populations and older adults with limited technology skills. Funding for support service providers (SSPs) remains a critical area of need in many states.

By addressing these barriers and expanding access, agencies are working toward a future where healthcare systems are fully inclusive and responsive to the needs of d/hh/db communities.

## **Addressing Sign Language Interpreter Shortages**

As many individuals may attest to in their daily lives, a critical and pervasive issue is the

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national shortage of qualified sign language interpreters. Some member states have formed workgroups and secured legislative funding to explore potential solutions for addressing this shortage, while others focus on expanding interpreter training programs, especially in rural areas. NASADHH member states remain innovative in addressing shortages including conducting needs assessments, looking at ways to create a pipeline of interpreters, and collaborating with local RID chapters.

At the same time, NASADHH is monitoring advancements in AI as a potential disruptor and/or a potential advancement in sign language interpreting accessibility. NASADHH collaborates with other national partners such as NAD, Gallaudet University, and RID to ensure alignment and maximum advocacy efforts.

## Emerging Challenges

### Economic and Legislative Landscape

In the post-COVID era, some states are experiencing budget constraints that have the potential to significantly impact service delivery. Budget constraints likely will impact entitlement programs such as Medicaid and food security benefits. NASADHH states monitor developments and keep open communication with consumers on changes to be aware of. Budget constraints also reflect shifting legislative priorities that focus on cost-saving measures rather than on expansion of programs and services. D/hh/db

advocates are encouraged to keep in communication with their local legislators to ensure their needs and priorities are taken into consideration in key decisions.

### Changes in Federal Priorities

With every change in federal administration and as key leadership positions take shape, states are closely monitoring the potential impact of federal policy changes on funding streams. Changes are difficult to predict and require careful discernment. While some initiatives may not be directly intended for d/hh/db communities, unintended ramifications may result in key areas such as deafblind individuals, older adults, or educational interpreter initiatives. NASADHH remains in allyship with d/hh/db communities to support diverse needs.

### Technological Advancements

As technology advances, so too do the needs of our communities change with it. As the platforms change, as digitization increases, as AI expands its reach, states must keep pace with the changes. The migration from analog to broadband telecommunications is transforming how states deliver relay and equipment distribution services. Programs must prioritize outreach to ensure communities understand these changes. Training programs and information sharing are vital. While technology advancements promise increased accessibility, there is also the risk that others are not included. Older adults and those in rural areas that may not have access to digital tools are vulnerable to being left behind.

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## Looking Ahead — Community Engagement is Critical

While the future lies ahead of us, states are fostering stronger community connections through town halls, d/hh/db awareness events, and legislative advocacy. Topics such as closed captioning in public spaces and ASL curriculum credits are of interest nationwide. Cultural competency trainings are also being prioritized to increase awareness and accessibility.

NASADHH remains committed to identifying and addressing the shared priorities of its member states and d/hh/db communities. By fostering collaboration and innovation, NASADHH aims to advance policies that benefit d/hh/db communities. The upcoming policy summits and ongoing legislative monitoring will ensure that NASADHH continues to advocate for meaningful change on both state and national levels.

For more information see:  
<http://nasadhh.org/>



**Elizabeth Hill**

Elizabeth Hill is the Executive Director of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She has over 25 years of experience dedicated to expanding access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, particularly children and families. During the COVID-19 pandemic, her leadership was pivotal to increasing access to sign language communications during emergency briefings and other critical announcements. This included providing unprecedented sign language access to the state's COVID-19 vaccination mega-sites. Ms. Hill holds a BA degree in American Government and a MSW degree from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.



**Robert Cooper**

Robert J. Cooper is the Executive Director of Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH). In his role, he advocates for communication equality and serves as advisory member on several committees and advisory councils within the State of Kansas. Currently, he also serves as the President of the National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH). Mr. Cooper has a Bachelor's degree in Government from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. He resides in Topeka with his wife and son.

# Donor List | February 2023 – December 2023

The list below recognizes donations made by individuals and organizations to the NAD from February 2023 to December 2023 (2024 donors will be listed in the next issue). Donors are listed under the designated fund, selected at the time of donation. If no fund is designated, donors are listed under the general fund. Individual donors are recognized by their cumulative level of giving. Organizational donors are recognized by their member type. Individuals and organizations who are not members are listed as Friends of the NAD (FON).

## DONOR KEY

B = Benefactor (\$1000 and up)  
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 S = Sustaining Member (\$250 to \$499)  
 C = Contributing Member (\$100 to \$249)  
 A = Advancing Member (up to \$99)  
 SA = State Association Affiliate  
 FON = Friends of the NAD  
 OA = Organizational Affiliate

*Individual giving levels and organizational member status are shown. Roman numerals following the Benefactors (B) identify cumulative donation amounts in \$1,000 increments.*

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Collectively, the members of the NAD Board of Directors contributed a total of **\$26,536.88** in calendar year 2024. This amount includes cash and in-kind donations.

### Cash Donations

\$1,922 in cash donations was donated directly by board members, irrespective of any funds raised by them through events or by other means.

### In-kind Donations

\$24,614.88 in-kind donations included the cost of travel expenses to Board meetings and the 2024 NAD Conference in Chicago, IL. This amount includes donations from both current and former board members in 2024 from either their personal funds, or through their employer.

In-kind contributions were calculated based on the submission of travel receipts, including airfares, hotel stays for the Chicago conference, and taxi fares.

**Join them! Donate to the NAD!**

**<https://www.nad.org/make-a-donation/>**

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## SAVE THE DATES:

—2025—

### Deaf Employment Webinar

April 24th, 2025  
1:00–2:00 pm EST

### NAD Board Meeting April 2025

### Deaf Employment Summit

June 5–6  
Gallaudet University  
Washington, DC

**Wawability**  
July 11–12, 2025  
Washington DC  
wawability2025.com

### NAD Board Meeting October 2025

**JrNAD Conference**  
Oct 15-19, 2025  
New Mexico School for  
the Deaf,  
Santa Fe, NM

### NAD Leadership Training Conference (NLTC)

October 29–Nov 2,  
2025  
Austin, Texas

—2026—

### NAD Board Meeting January 2026

**NAD Board Meeting**  
April 2026  
San Francisco, CA

**NAD Conference**  
June 28–July 4, 2026  
San Francisco, CA



## Playlist

Interested in seeing the videos? You can use this playlist to go directly to the videos on YouTube. They are also accessible from the article page.

President Lisa Rose and Interim CEO Bobbie Beth Scoggins, [State of the NAD](#)

Elsie Stecker, [Interpreters at the Biden-Harris White House](#)

Kelby Brick, [Attack on Section 504 and Update](#)

Sherri Collins, [How DSA Creates a Vibrant Community for All](#)

Aubrie Bauer, [Does Your Geography Limit Your Options?](#)

Sara Nović, [US Dept. of Education: What Does It Actually Do?](#)

Marla Hatrak, [In Focus: Deaf Education](#)

Elizabeth Hill & Robert Cooper, [NASADHH State of the States](#)



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