





Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Statewide Advisory Council
February 9, 2023



Updates from Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa Commissioner at MCDHH



1. Appointment of new EHS Secretary, Kate Walsh
2. Division and Departmental Updates
 - HR Liaison
 - Social Services Department
 - Communication Access Services Division



EHS: Secretary Kate Walsh



Ms. Kate Walsh,
Incoming EHS Secretary

Start date: March 1, 2023

“Kate Walsh is exactly the leader Massachusetts needs for this moment in health care,” said Governor Healey. “She has a proven track record of delivering results on health equity, affordability and behavioral health, while also addressing social determinants of health like food and housing insecurity. She will bring an innovative and compassionate approach to the office that centers the needs of patients and providers.”

-Governor Maura T. Healey
January 25, 2023



World World Boston Visit





Hiring Updates

Two Jobs Currently Posted

- Legal ASL Interpreters PT
[Job Description - Legal ASL Interpreter \(23000069\) \(taleo.net\)](#)
- Legal CDI Interpreters PT
[Job Description - Certified Deaf Interpreter – Legal \(23000068\) \(taleo.net\)](#)

Two Interviews Scheduled

- Adult Case Manager
- Referral Specialist A/B

One Position Filled

- Business Office Coordinator
*Start date: March 6, 2023

Positions in Pre-Offer Stage

- Vlog Project Coordinator
- Social Media & Digital Content Specialist
- Full-time Staff CDI
- Executive Assistant to the Commissioner
- Referral Services Supervisor



Janay Mitchell
HR Liaison



Updates from Social Services Department



**Peggy Lee, Director
Social Services Department**

- Children's Specialists are scheduled to meet with the new director of the Public School Partnership program through TLC and with the Clarke School mainstream staff to work on collaborating.
- Substance Use Disorder grant money- we have received proposals in response to the RFR for the 1.1 million dollar grant from BSAS to enhance SUD services for DHH. A team will review the proposals next week and chose up to three to split the money.
- There is a shortage of ASL-proficient human services/direct services workers and TODs as well as ASL/CDI interpreters and CART. MCDHH has been a longtime field placement site and it was re-activated this academic year with Salem State students.



- A mother of a MCDHH client is working with local representatives she has asked us to share this information:

“Reps. Nguyen and Vargas have filed **Massachusetts HD.2798**, An Act relative to parental notification about student health evaluations, and Senator Payano will be co-sponsoring the legislation.

This bill is important for every parent with school-aged child in Massachusetts. Although the schools currently screen our children for a variety of health issues (vision, hearing, spine, mental health, etc.), presently there is no law which requires failed screenings to be immediately communicated to parents. For my family, this meant over a five-year gap between a failed hearing screening and communication to our family. We had no way of knowing that our daughter had a condition which causes gradual hearing loss. We could have known this in 2017 had the schools communicated to us about the failed hearing screening at that time. This could be your child, too.

There will be an opportunity to participate in a public hearing pertinent to this proposed bill this spring. If you would like to participate in a Zoom meeting with the legislative sponsors of the bill or receive email updates from me for coalition-building, please contact me, **Audrey Falk, at audreyfalk@gmail.com.**”



- SSD is collaborating with AGO's office. Liza Hirsch will join the SSD meeting on Friday.
- MCDHH and DESE had an IEP Feedback Forum on January 31 via zoom.
- The purpose was to give feedback on the proposed IEP changes as they relate to DHH students. The DESE team said it was one of their most productive meetings and they loved that it ended with feedback from a student, Elisabeth Dardeno. Elisabeth was the only student to have joined one of these meetings and it made their night.



Communication Access Services Division

- Screening
- Interpreters
- Referral
- Workforce Development



**Cat Dvar, Director
Communication Access Services Division**



- The Screening Redesign Request for Information (RFI) is posted, and we are reaching out to researchers now.
- We will then gather the information we need to create a robust Request for Responses (RFR). We anticipate the RFR will be disseminated in FY24.
- We hope to have a new, inclusive, fully redesigned Screening Program sometime in FY26 or FY27.
- Crystal Eusebio, our Screening Coordinator, has been working collaboratively with Denise Martinez, the Interpreter Supervisor and Training Coordinator, to train new and existing Screening Evaluators. As a result, our pool of Screening Evaluators has significantly increased in both size and diversity, which we hope will create an inclusive testing environment for all the diverse candidates who take our Screenings.



- Our staff interpreters continue to work tirelessly to provide the highest quality services both on-site and remotely for our staff and for the community.
- Interviews are complete for our full time Deaf Interpreter position and we are hoping to hire someone soon.
- The 2 part-time Deaf Interpreter Legal positions have been re-posted.
- The 2 part-time ASL/spoken English Legal Interpreter positions are posted.
- We hope to hire for all the open positions shortly so we can move forward into the new year with a full team.



- Our Referral Team has been working tirelessly as well to meet the communication access needs of Deaf, late-deafened, Deaf/Blind, hard of hearing and Oral Deaf constituents across the Commonwealth
- Referral staff continue to offer 24/7 Standby Press Conference coverage for the Governor's requests statewide and for the Boston Mayor's office
- MCDHH has been working closely with KMBS on the Referral Modernization Project:
 - We just completed training for all our Referral staff on the new system and are currently deep into User Acceptance Testing.
 - We are on track with our timeline and continue to anticipate the transition from the current interim Referral Software System to the Final Fully Modernized System to happen in the spring.



Andy Veith, our Interim AHE Coordinator, has been busy at work. Andy has been:

- Filling after-hours emergencies, working closely with our Referral Staff to fill emergencies that come in late in the day and roll over into the evening, and supporting the work of Referral.
- Andy has been gathering, tracking and analyzing AHE data to help determine if a permanent program is warranted
- We continue to see an uptick in the number of emergencies both called in and filled successfully since the pilot program began.



Holly Pearson, Workforce Development Coordinator has been extremely busy coordinating the following:

- ASL Interpreter Subject Matter Expert Consultant Group (SMEC) – this diverse group of external SMEs started its work in January and will continue through March of 2023. They'll create an action plan for MCDHH to assist our efforts to address every step along the interpreter; diversity, equity and inclusion are the primary drivers.
- CART Subject Matter Expert Consultant Group (SMEC) – similar to the Interpreter SMEC, but focusing on CART recruitment, training, mentorship, retention, longevity and diversity, as well. The RFR for this SMEC went out in January and the bids are now closed. Holly is currently assembling a review team to evaluate the CART SMEC candidates; we will announce contract awards in the next few weeks. We anticipate the CART SMEC's work to be completed before the end of FY23.



- CART Training Program collaboration meetings with Rhode Island Community Colleges – we are hoping to become a part of RICC’s CART Training Program that is in the start-up stages right now. We may help establish a pipeline of new court stenographers--who want a career in CART provision--to work in MA and join our contract.
- Outreach – collaborating with various entities to create outreach presentations to draw young people statewide into the fields of communication access starting in middle and high schools
- Outreach/Education Programs for our Sister Agencies



CART Forum for Feedback

MCDHH invites all stakeholders to join MCDHH
on
Wednesday, February 22, 2023
6pm – 8pm on Zoom

MCDHH is seeking input from freelance CART providers, private sector requestors, state agencies, CART provision agencies, CART referral specialists and CART users on all aspects of the current contract, as well as requests for consideration for items to be included in the upcoming contract MCD08.

During this Forum for Feedback, we will be discussing issues and concerns affecting CART providers, CART users and all CART stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MCDHH wants to give CART providers and community members the opportunity to share feedback on the contract with MCDHH staff.



Additionally, MCDHH will be accepting written comments, or comments provided in ASL via Vimeo, MP4, or YouTube links. **This public comment period is from February 10 – February 24, 2023.**

MCDHH will provide CART and ASL Interpreters for communication access during this Forum.

If additional access is necessary, please request services by contacting Cat Dvar, Director of Communication Access Services, at cat.b.dvar@mass.gov.

Please RSVP to sacmcdhh@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Facebook video: <https://fb.watch/ijWBgANUtI/>

Transcript: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b50pd_fx9JeLkDubF9oNenwCQCNI-uEljMZ4MEJZNA/edit?usp=sharing

The logo for the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) is displayed on a white rounded rectangle. It features three stylized human figures in yellow, dark blue, and light blue. To the right of the figures is the text "MCDHH" in large blue letters, followed by "Massachusetts Commission For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing" in smaller black text. A blue outline map of the state of Massachusetts is positioned to the right of the text.

MCDHH
Massachusetts Commission
For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing

Thank you!