

## **NC Council for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing**

At the urging of a classmate, Don Crump who is also a member of this council, as well as myself being curious, I attended the council meeting that occurred on November 19, 2010 at the State Employees Credit Union Operations Center at 3101 Wake Forest Road in Raleigh, NC. I must say, I was very impressed.

You cannot miss a word at these meetings. They have two interpreters, one up front and one sitting down in front of a group. There is a camera aimed at the front interpreter which the video is shown on a screen at one of the back corners of the room. The speaker holds two microphones, one for the usual PA system and the other is for the assistive listening devices which sound is broadcast to hard-of-hearing users wearing receiving devices similar to earphones.

And open captioning, which is displayed on the wall behind the speaker. Anything that anybody says, whether it's the speaker or a member of the council across the room is captioned.

The purpose of these meetings, which are held every quarter, is to address issues of the Deaf and HOH (Hard-of-Hearing). One legislative statute outlines the 5 major duties of the Council; in a nutshell, the Council is charged with advising the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on matters pertaining to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind North Carolinians.

For example, the issues discussed during the morning session were:  
Updates on: DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) and Transition of Schools and Programs to DPI (Department of Public Instruction).  
Investigation and Report of Allegations of Abuse/Neglect at NCSD.  
Update on the Transfer of State Operated Programs to DPI.  
Superintendent Search Committee Report

After the morning break, there was a media program regarding the Telecommunications Access Update. It was mentioned here that videos on YouTube are not required to be closed captioning. Only network TV shows on the internet are required.

The 22 minute media presentation shown can be found online. Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and in the search box, type in "20th Anniversary of ADA" without the quotes. On the search results page, click on "Celebrating Progress: Lives at the 20th Anniversary of the ADA" by fcctdotgovvideo. This video is open captioned.

Then after the Telecommunications Access Update, there was a listening session regarding feedback on Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind issues.

One feedback mentioned by Earl Elkins of NC Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NCRID), when he was traveling, he received an alert on his blackberry that his flight was canceled and he was able to catch another flight.

After lunch, committee meetings were formed for the exchange of ideas and to bring issues to the forefront. Three groups were formed: Education, Community and Family Issues which included medical, and Communication Access.

After an hour, a member of each committee informed the Council of their discussions. A couple of examples were:  
From the Community and Family Issues committee; mentioned was making a requirement for doctors to have interpreters on site instead of relying on point to point video for interpretations.

Communication Access; easier filing of complaints to the FCC and to invite a member of the FCC to the council meetings to help the FCC focus on issues as well as explaining future goals of access for the Deaf.

Two North Carolina statutes govern the N.C. Council for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing.

In 2003, the General Assembly passed a bill amending the original Council Legislation. The act amends the laws relating to the Council for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing by increasing the members on the Council to 30 and changing the appointing authority for two of the members.

Although not at this meeting, four of the Council members are members of the state legislature, Other members represents various aspects of the Deaf Community: HLA-NC (Hearing Loss Association of NC), an Audiologist, Cochlear Implants, NC Assoc. of the Deaf, NC Deaf Blind Assoc., NC Pediatric Society, NC Black Deaf Advocates, Educators, Parents of Deaf Children, DPI mentioned above, NCRID also mentioned above, members of the Department of Human and Health Services and even Deaf Consumers.

*(No legislators came to the Council meeting – probably because it was just after the November election. Some of them were not re-elected and others may not be re-appointed by the new leaders. So, it remains to be seen which legislators will serve on the Council in the future. We may know more by the next Council meeting or we may not – these things take time. But...eventually, their names will be included in the list of Council members on our website - Jan Withers.)*

Meeting minutes of the past 3 years can be seen online: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/council/index.htm> and the November 9th's minutes will be posted after the February 18th's meeting.

As a final note, these meetings are very, very, informative and show a tremendous support of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing community. I

highly recommend attending these meetings not only to observe but maybe put forth an issue that you would like to see handled by the Council.

Also, because a meeting agenda may not allow time for the visiting public to speak, it is very important for you to contact a Council member representing your group to let him or her know of your issue or recommendation. You can find the list of Council members on DSDHH's website.

The next meeting, on February 18, 9:00 a.m.-3:00pm, will be held at the Wake Commons Bldg, 4011 Cary Drive, Raleigh, NC 27610.

Three more meetings are scheduled for May 20, August 19 and November 18 with the locations to be announced on their website:  
<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/council/index.htm> The website, also has links to a list of the members and to the statutes that govern the Council.

And a postscript: Jan Withers, Director of the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing wanted to emphasize to the readers of The Bugler that these Council meetings ARE open to the public. RSVPs are requested ONLY to make sure the communication needs of everyone could be met.

Lester Latkowski

This article was corroborated with Jan Withers.