

STATE OF MARYLAND



Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

2003 Annual Report

January 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor
Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor
Yvonne Dunkle, Director



State of Maryland

ODHH

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

6 St. Paul Street • Suite 1203 • Baltimore, MD 21202

Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., *Governor* • Michael S. Steele, *Lt. Governor* • Yvonne M. Dunkle, *Director*

Dear Governor Ehrlich and Members of the General Assembly:

I am pleased to present the first annual report delineating the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) activities for 2003. The report covers the period of January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003.

The report includes the ODHH's historical overview and responsibilities followed by five-year strategic plan and its key goals and objectives. The highlights of the activities were outlined based on ODHH's responsibilities and strategic plan. The five-year strategic plan was developed based on the issues and concerns presented at five town hall meetings throughout Maryland. The plan has 10 key areas of focus – Access, Communication, Education, Health Care and Intervention Services, Judicial System, Employment, Emergency Preparation, Information and Referral, Civic and Community Involvement, and Technology. This new strategic plan now forms the foundation of the work of ODHH.

The staff of ODHH, with its advisory council, has been active in the area of community outreach by taking part in local events, meetings and conferences throughout the state. Provision of resource materials, general literature, exhibits displays, and informational presentations through outreach activities have helped to generate greater awareness of ODHH, its goals and objectives, and activities. The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as a result of community outreach has received numerous contacts from constituents, state agencies and the general public as evident in this report.

The information provided in this report will help us assess the progress we have made thus far, determine our priorities and goals for the coming years, and ensure sound planning to address the challenges that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Yvonne M. Dunkle
Director

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MANDATE

In accordance to Code State Government Article, section 9-2407 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, on or before January 1, 2002, and annually thereafter, the ODHH director shall submit the annual report to the Governor and, in accordance with section 2-1246 of this article, to the members of the General Assembly.

ODHH received funding on July 1, 2002 and became fully operational in September 2002. This annual report was not produced until ODHH had operated for a full year, so this report covers the period of January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CREATION OF THE ODHH

Numerous studies, temporary commissions, and advisory committees and boards in Maryland over the past 30 plus years have consistently identified the same recurring issues related to deaf and hard of hearing constituents from 1966 to 2000.¹ Recommendations calling for a permanent government agency and staff had not been realized. As a result of the collaborative efforts of Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization, along with various organizations serving deaf and hard of hearing as well as several members of disability groups, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing became a reality – after the Maryland General Assembly recognized the need for the creation of the Office specifically to serve deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. ODHH was established in October 2001 through enabling legislation (Chapter 537 of the Acts of the 2001 General Assembly) with the aim of addressing service gaps, lack of accessibility to services, and lack of awareness on the part of public officials and agencies in addressing the needs of the target population.

Maryland became the 32nd state in the United States and the most recent to have a separate state entity geared specifically to the program and service needs of deaf and hard of hearing citizens within the state.

ABOUT ODHH

ODHH is the newest and smallest office in the State government system, and serves as a coordinating agency that reports directly to the Governor's Office. With an initial fiscal year 2003 appropriation of \$209,313, ODHH opened for business in July of 2002 with one staff member transferred from the Governor's Office of Individuals with Disabilities. In August of 2002, the Governor appointed the new Director, who began her duties on September 1, 2002, and the office was in full operation with two staff working full-time.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State. The responsibilities of the Office shall include: (1) providing, advocating and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (2) improving access to communication and to existing services and programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (3) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals as appropriate; (4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services, including the acquisition and distribution of visual smoke detectors; (6) developing a

¹ Taken from the report, The State of Maryland Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing People: Problems and Solution, Chapter IV reviews those recommendations, p. 8. Maryland Association of the Deaf, June 2000.

referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (8) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to educational, health and social opportunities; (9) working with private organizations, the federal government and other units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (10) working to eliminate underemployment and unemployment of deaf and had of hearing individuals; (11) providing a network through which services provided by State and federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled; and (12) promoting compliance with State, local and federal laws and policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

ODHH TOWN HALL MEETINGS

ODHH is mandated to hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to receive public comments on:

- Quality of state services and programs affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals
- ODHH-related functions and operations
- Other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including the 12 mandated program description responsibilities

ODHH met the mandate above by conducting seven Public Forums across the State of Maryland to collect feedback on the development of a five-year strategic plan based on the results of five town hall meetings the year before as well as to collect any new issues to be added to the strategic plan. Approximately 163 people attended public forum meetings.

In addition to public forums during its first year, ODHH hosted seven feedback discussion sessions with various professionals and stakeholders with a total of 166 participants in attendance.

RELATION TO OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

In addition to responsibilities above, ODHH shall: (1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local and other public services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (2) to advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals; (3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and (4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

During the fall and winter of 2002, ODHH hosted five town hall meetings throughout the State of Maryland, which over 350 people attended and provided feedback to ODHH. This public feedback helped to lay the foundation for the ODHH Strategic Plan, which has 10 key areas of focus for the next five years– Access, Communication, Education, Health Care and Intervention Services, Judicial System, Employment, Emergency Preparation, Information and Referral, Civic and Community Involvement, and Technology.

The ODHH Strategic Plan was developed and further revised after receiving input from professionals serving deaf and hard of hearing citizens during feedback discussion sessions held throughout calendar year 2003. See Appendix 1 for the Plan.

KEY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The ODHH Strategic Plan incorporates key goals and objectives, which involve implementation of the 12 responsibilities, as outlined above. Of the 12 responsibilities, ODHH was able to address nine of these during its first year of the operation. These responsibilities are identified with the activities outlined in this report.

2003 HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights the various ways that ODHH has been instrumental in connecting the community with the state government entities using ODHH as a bridge through information sharing, provision of communication accommodations and arrangements of meeting with key people to achieve desired results/end means. These activities fall under responsibilities #1, #2, #4, #8 and #11.

1. Community Coalition Building Efforts

State Agencies

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Community Entities

Maryland Coalition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and other community organizations

Issue: There was no centralized coordination of various issues faced by members of the organizations in the community; thus, it was difficult for ODHH as a new and small coordinating office to address these issues in an effective manner. The Maryland Coalition for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MDCDHH) was organized to provide support services, networking, advocacy, and education, as well as to provide ODHH and state officials with a unified voice in representing consumer needs across the State. The membership for the coalition is open to nonprofit organizations serving people who are deaf or hard of hearing in the State of Maryland. Each organization sends one representative to the meeting and has the power of one vote from each. The coalition currently consists of 45 organizations, representing a vast network of partners from state and local governments, non-profit agencies and organizations as well as advocacy groups. The coalition has five elected officers led by the president, and the board consists of the officers and chairs of four standing committees. The Coalition does not have the resources or IRS standing as a nonprofit organization to apply for grants to fund communication accommodations needs for coalition meetings.

Result: ODHH has funded communication accommodations for the coalition and other community organization meetings where ODHH staff has taken part in information sharing and developing relationships to better ascertain the needs and concerns of deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

2. Mental Health Coalition Building

State Agencies

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Community Entities

Deaf/Mental Health Coalition

Issues: The Deaf/Mental Health Coalition consists of 25 representatives involving professionals, organizations and community members across the State, with concerns about mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services for the deaf and hard of hearing

community as well as the status of a vacant director position for the deaf program in Springfield Hospital Center.

Result: This coalition has formed through the coordination of ODHH. Efforts will be made to work with the Mental Hygiene Administration along with other administrations under the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Developmental Disabilities Administration, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration, and AIDS Administration).

3. Access to Quality Education

State Agencies

State Department of Education (MSDE)

Community Entities

Maryland Association of the Deaf
Maryland State Steering Committee
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Issues: There is a need for a permanent, long-term solution to ensure that all deaf children in Maryland have access to a quality education. For years, school systems have hired people as interpreters without any knowledge and evaluation of their skills. The concern is that the current Maryland Quality Assurance Screening (MQAS) program administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is a voluntary program, therefore, not all educational interpreters take the evaluation nor the school systems use the program to assess interpreters' skills and qualifications prior to hiring them. The MQAS is a proficiency screening instrument designed to assess the knowledge and skills of educational interpreters who use American Sign Language or an English-based sign system to facilitate communication between deaf or hard of hearing persons in educational settings. The current system would still not prevent unqualified people from being hired to interpret for deaf children. There is no requirement that all interpreters take or pass the evaluation as a condition of their employment. In addition, MSDE cut the contractual position due to budget cuts after the coordinator left; thus, the MQAS program became inactive.

Result: ODHH coordinated a meeting between the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), a statewide non-profit advocacy organization, and the Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (MSSCDHHS), comprised of professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in their counties which is a statewide non-profit organization serving the interest of deaf and hard of hearing students in the mainstreamed education programs, to discuss similar issues and concerns. Both community organizations are now educated and informed of the MQAS program status and concerns and have agreed to work together. Future meetings are planned between the MSDE staff, MDAD, MSSCDHHS and ODHH to address the issues above.

4. Driver Education School Accessibility

State Agencies

Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Community Entities

Maryland School for the Deaf

Issues: Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) discontinued its driver education program after its driver's education teacher retired in 1999. Since then, students at MSD took driver's education classes at the Frederick Community College (FCC) but classes at FCC were not offered every semester. MSD students sometimes tried to enroll private-operated driver's education classes

but often struggled with communication issues because sign language interpreters were not provided. The Graduate Licensing System, however, requires that individuals seeking an initial driver's license must complete the standardized driver education course prior to receiving a provisional license. Many of the licensed and certified driver education schools are not prepared and are sometimes reluctant to accept deaf and hard of hearing individuals due to the costs associated with interpreter services, which are expensive for many schools, largely due to the discrepancy between the price of a qualified interpreter (roughly \$1100-\$4500) and the tuition of the class (less than \$300). Accordingly, many deaf and hard of hearing graduates have been unable to obtain their driver's license and, as a result, drive illegally without a license.

Result: Plans are under way for meetings to address this issue.

COOPERATIVE MEETINGS

ODHH staffs met with both Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Department of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) personnel separately to discuss the ODHH Strategic Plan and agreed to work collaboratively to achieve the objectives and strategies associated with the education and employment goals in the strategic plan.

Also, ODHH staff met with the Director and Deputy Director of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities and shared many common issues on behalf of our constituents. We agreed that both offices, GOID and ODHH, would work collaboratively on many access issues through legislative efforts, meetings with all state agencies, educational training, data collection, and so forth.

These following meetings fall under mandates #8 and #10.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

ODHH served **321** constituents in 2003. The areas of these requests ranged from Employment to Advocacy to State/Local Compliance to being the Information and Referral (I & R) as the most frequent requests by the constituents. This service falls under mandates #3, #6 and #7

Services/Resources Need	Number of Constituents	Email	TTY/Phone	In Person	Letter
Access	8	7		1	
Advocacy	25	23			2
Communication	16	16			
Education	15	15			
Employment	27	25	1	1	
Health Care	12	8	3		1
Housing	3	2	1		
Information and Referral	129	110	18	1	
Legal	6	2	3		1
State Law Compliance	14	7	6		1
Transportation	4	4			
Others	22	20	2		
Total	281	239	34	3	5

	0-24 hours	24-48 hours	5< days	10< days	10>days
Response Time	158	25	22	7	15

In addition to the number of contacts above, this Office manages the process and screening of the smoke detector applications. The Office received **40** contacts about the smoke detector program, as follows:

Inquiries **6**
 Request/Application **14**
 Application Rec'd **11**
 Information **9**

The grand total of number of contacts is **321** for the calendar year of 2003.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In addition to serving the constituents, the staff has conducted various outreach activities including the presentations, trainings and exhibits. These activities fall under mandates #4, #7 and #8. The staff developed new ODHH brochure and created new display booth for outreach purposes.

Presentations

ODHH staff gave **17** presentations on an overview of ODHH and its role in State government, as well as the five-year strategic plan. Approximately **763** participants have attended in these presentations.

Training Seminars

As per its mandate #4, ODHH is responsible to increase public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the staff has conducted **3** trainings. The trainings were provided to MDOT staff, students at Catonsville High School, and Deaf Immersion Ministry. Approximately total of **145** participants attended the trainings.

The director gave a legislative workshop on “Legislative Advocacy and ODHH.” She discussed key areas of focus and advocacy strategies to implement the ODHH strategic plan goals and how these tie in with MDAD’s symposium priorities brought up by the members of deaf and hard of hearing community. About **50** participants attended.

Exhibits

ODHH has set up its exhibit booth at various events listed below:

- MDAD Convention – over 200 participants
- Senior Expo in Baltimore County – 25+ visited
- Deaf Exposition in Baltimore City – 23+ visited out of 450 participants
- Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Conference – 25+ visited
- Maryland Educational Interpreters Conference – 30+ visited

Total – 303+ visited

In addition to presentations, trainings and exhibits, the staff has attended total of **42** various community events, meetings and conferences to serve as an exposure and education about the existence of ODHH as well as updates.

The Office should be staffed and open during regular business hours by one person.

OPERATING BUDGET

The annual report is between both fiscal year of 2003 and 2004. The ODHH total budget was \$209,313 from general funds in its first year of existence during fiscal year 2003 and \$223,293 during fiscal year 2004.

To calculate the total operating budget from both fiscal year budgets of 2003 and 2004 for the calendar year of 2003, half of FY03 budget of \$209,313 and half of FY04 budget of \$223,293 for the total of \$216,303 which was used during the calendar year.

ODHH largest expenditure is the personnel, staff salaries and benefits that make up 73 percent of the overall budget.

MARYLAND ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

In the mandate, the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was authorized in October 2001 (Chapter 537, Acts of 2001). The Council advises the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on carrying out its duties, and reviews statewide activities for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including reviewing reports and publications. The Council also fosters coordination and support of programs for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and studies ways to ensure that individuals with hearing problems use the facilities and services available to them. The Council shall hold at least quarterly, regularly scheduled meetings and open meetings to provide direct communication between deaf and hard of hearing individuals and private and public organizations and the general public, about programs and services for and needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Also, the Council shall assist any local governing body of a county to establish a local advisory council for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the county for purposes of implementing the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other relevant State and federal laws.

Of the council's 16 members, eight are public members from the community and eight serve as ex-officio. Out of eight public members, five shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The public members are appointed to three-year terms by the Governor with Senate advice and consent (Code State Government Article, sections. 9-2404 through 9-2406).

The members are staggered in three different 3-year terms and a member may not serve consecutively more than two 3-year terms. At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is appointed and qualifies. Any member who fails to attend at least 50 percent of the regularly scheduled meetings during any 12-month period shall be considered to have resigned.

The members are:

State Government – Ex-Officio

Alexis Allenback – Designee, Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation
John Gaver – Designee, Department of Transportation
Pamela Jenkins-Dobson – Designee, Human Relations Commission
Will Johnson – Designee, Department of Human Resources
Deborah Metzger – Designee, State Department of Education
James Tucker, Vice Chair - Superintendent of Maryland School for the Deaf
Linda Webb – Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development
Gwen Winston – Designee, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Community - Public

Mary Pat Bromwell
Benjamin J. Dubin
Lindsay Dunn, Chair
Ethelette Ennis
Victor Galloway
Shana Gibbs
Howard Leonard
Kristi Merriweather

The council meets four times a year, rotating in different regions of the State.



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