

Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Evaluation Summary 2020

Summary of Services

- CHSC's Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) had a **total of 101 active clients during 2020**. The total number of service hours provided by CCDHH this year was 2,155.5 direct services hours expanding across all domains of service. Some clients benefit from multiple services. Services included: community support and case management, education, legal, independent living skills, medical, mental health, vocational, and youth services.
 - VR Services 44 clients
 - Pre-ETS 11 students
 - Support Services 40 clients
 - DV / SV Support / Advocacy Services 17 clients
 - Support Services and Advocacy Service Hours – 2,155.5
 - SignStage – 220 students
 - Community Events - Youth
 - Advocates 4 Kids events – 10 students (virtual)
 - Community Events - 3
 - Trainings/Workshops - 16
 - Vlogs and Informational Videos – 61 (with a total of 11,531 views)
- ASL Community Classes
 - CCDHH – 127 students
 - CHSC / internal – 21 staff members
 - SignStage – 40 students
- Volunteers
 - 5 volunteers provided over 99 hours

Global Objective for 2020

The goal for 2020 was to continue to increase vocational rehabilitation service participation and increase the number of hours of support services to community members. This action plan changed dramatically when the COVID-19 pandemic closed our Center in March of 2020 (We were closed from March 14th-May 11th). At this time, we were forced to re-think our strategy for reaching our consumers and for providing support. Once the Center re-opened for in-person appointments, messaging to clients became a critical focus of our staff. Providing accurate information to consumers in American Sign Language regarding the pandemic was a major objective throughout the year. This was achieved by creating videos that were posted on social media platforms at regular intervals and when new information about the Corona Virus and the vaccine was released to the public. In addition, providing services in a safe and secure manner as well as in an accessible format while following CDC guidelines for mask wearing, etc. became a priority.

Action Objectives for Referral Sources Included:

- A working relationship with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities for additional training for D/deaf and hard of hearing community members.
- A referral relationship with Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities for D/deaf and hard of hearing community members
- Increasing business partnerships and strengthening existing relationships with community agencies and organizations

Data Collection Process

In 2020, we kept our services centered on clients. Through individual check-ins and virtual meetings, we were able to assess the needs of our most vulnerable clients. We used a general questionnaire as a guide to determine what our community members needed and an Excel spreadsheet to track the number of contacts. We did not use paper client survey approach since most of our clients were interacting with staff for the majority of the year on virtual platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger, Google Duo, etc.) and through the Video Phone.

In mid-2020, all of the CCDHH team was consistently using Apricot, a software program to keep track of client information, case notes and number of service hours.

Outcomes/Highlights

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the state of Ohio in March of 2020.

Despite shifting priorities caused by the pandemic, we were able to fulfill many of our action plans from 2019. By the mid-2020, all of our staff became adept at using Apricot for client information and case notes. Due to the increase in service requests at the end of 2019, we were able to hire another person to join our team. In 2020 the position of Community Outreach Specialist: Vocational Rehabilitation & Support Services was added to our department.

Additional staff assisted in outreach to clients as well as providing food and housing support. The Center conducted a "Drive and Drop" to restock our food pantry and 20 individuals benefitted from food and other forms of assistance.

In the early months of 2020 and prior to the shutdown, we were able to offer free tax preparation services to 20 individuals from deaf and hard of hearing community. In addition, we offered several cultural competency trainings before converting to virtual platforms.

As we adjusted to on-line and virtual meetings and trainings we resumed providing workshops in this format for the remainder of 2020. One of our new community partners, the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, received a cultural competency training (in 2 parts) which included 30 participants.

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Deaf Services Center in Columbus, our CCDHH developed a statewide training for mental health providers to learn the intricacies of effectively serving deaf and hard of hearing clients in Mental Health agencies. In addition to developing an on-line training video that lives on the state's website (and e-based learning platform), the team developed a virtual training to be conducted across the state in 2021.

With funding from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, our Center completed a pilot program in collaboration with a local software developer. Through our vocational coaching we have seen many deaf employees struggle in new jobs because of barriers to communication. The VVT app provides simple visual instructions and ASL videos to explain everyday job tasks. We had 8 individuals test the app for ease of use and efficacy and found it to be very helpful. In 2021 we will await the decision by OOD to allow us to continue to use the program.

Several 2019 goals that were not met:

- We were not able to experiment with UbiDuo system during 2020 to test its effectiveness. We did not have many clients who have requested written English accommodation.
- CHSC did not hire an agency interpreter to more effectively address the need for equal access to communication within our organization.

Statistics for CCDHH Services provided by client feedback

With the disruptions COVID brought, inadvertently, formal satisfaction surveys were not distributed in 2020 to clients. Instead, we gathered information in less formal ways as indicated in the paragraph above. We worked diligently to stay in touch with clients and meet their needs. During our shutdown we spent our days calling clients to touch base and offer support and used an Excel spreadsheet to track these contacts.

Accessibility of Services

Our clients in our primary location in University Circle, had access to all of our programs and services offered at CCDHH once the Center re-opened for in-person appointments in May of 2020. In addition to in-person appointments, virtual appointments were also provided to those who preferred to remain at home. All CCDHH staff are fluent in American Sign Language, which is also the primary language of the majority of employees who work in the department.

COVID 19 created many barriers to accessibility for our deaf consumers. In response to the pandemic and a request for services, we offered video phone and virtual appointments. We also followed CDC guidelines and required mask wearing for staff and clients. Our offices, waiting area and meeting spaces were re-configured to allow for maximum social distancing and Plexiglas barriers were installed in our conference rooms. We required staff to quarantine and not physically come to work when exposed to COVID 19. Implementing these safe practices allowed for even our most vulnerable clients to feel safe in seeking treatment.

Financial accessibility is still a Center-wide objective. With the exception of our Community Sign Language classes, CCDHH provides services at no cost to our clients, community members and partners. CHSC also offers the Audiology Patient Assistance Program (APA) for financial assistance in obtaining devices such as doorbell flashers, alarm clocks, baby criers, etc. In 2020, 53 deaf and hard of hearing people were served through APA receiving hearing aid repairs, devices or professional services at a greatly reduced cost. In addition to the APA program, CCDHH offered financial support to consumers who fell behind in their bills or were in need of rent support. We served 20 clients through our Basic Needs Funds. The agency initiated a Drive and Drop to stock our small food pantry to provide support to those especially vulnerable to food insecurity. Consumers could come to our Center to pick up a bag of groceries or staff could drop food at a client's home.

Our service providers in 2020 included a new Deaf Community Outreach Specialist: Vocational Rehabilitation & Support Services who provides additional client support to our expanding services, a Deaf Senior Program Associate who provides services in all areas and oversight to the team's services and projects, a Deaf advocate, who provides violence prevention education as well as support in the criminal justice system and beyond, a Deaf social worker, who provides support services and case management; a Deaf vocational rehabilitation specialist, who provides job search, placement, and coaching services; a Deaf Operations Manager who oversees scheduling and day to day cohesion of the team; and an ASL fluent SignStage Artistic Manager who provides educational programming and ASL classes throughout the region, all led by the Director of the CCDHH, Dr. Maria O'Neil Ruddock, who has been affiliated with the agency since 1990.

The CCDHH is humbled to serve the D/deaf community in northeast Ohio with a majority Deaf staff, reflecting our commitment to the best practice of "deaf serving deaf." Just as linguistic and cultural competency are key to serving racial and ethnic minority populations, it is also best practice to serve deaf individuals with an awareness and respect for deaf culture and language. All of our staff are fluent in American Sign Language and skilled in other communication modalities in order to meet the needs of clients who may be low-language, low-English proficient or have other communication needs.

CCDHH offered one sign language Zoom class to 21 CHSC staff members to support the overall accessibility of the Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center.

For our clients who do not sign or prefer to use spoken language approach, we have staff members available to assist and in 2020, our staff have also worked with interpreters to communicate with our clients who use spoken English.

Our clients' diverse communication needs are often matched with appropriate accommodations upon request such as on-site interpreting, VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) and use of PowerPoint, and CART captioning.

Often, our clients will interact with many members of our team. It is common for someone to seek help with a financial problem or a health access issue before revealing that they are in a previously unidentified abusive situation with a hearing caregiver. Because CCDHH work

together synergistically and are experts in the deaf experience, they can holistically address all of a client's needs in order to bring more stability, safety and connection to the client's life.

Action Plan for 2021

Our Action Plan for 2021 will include the following:

- Revision of the Client satisfaction survey revision (delete interpreting)
- Provide DV/SV Trainings and Increase Partnerships
- Develop Summer Youth Work Experience
- Explore partnership with CCBDD – Develop Pilot Program
- Conduct live or virtual Town Hall – to assess community needs