

Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

2023 Performance Evaluation Report

Overview

The Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has continued to face challenges, but overall, 2023 was a strong year. Despite obstacles, we proudly served over 4,000 hours of individuals through a variety of programs, including Case Management, Vocational Rehabilitation, Grant-funded initiatives, and more.

We remain committed to supporting our wonderful Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Below is a summary of our 2023 impact:

Breakdown of Services:

VR Service/Pre-ETS: 8

Support Service 101 Clients

DV/SV 6 Clients

Support service and advocacy 4,261 Hours

Advocate for Kids 11 Events

Community Outreach 10 Events

Training and Workshops 18 Total

Vlogs and information videos 27 Total

ASL classes 83 Students

Global Objective for 2023

Goals for 2023

Our goals for 2023 were to expand vocational rehabilitation services and strengthen overall community support. One ongoing challenge we face is Language Deprivation Syndrome (LDS). Many of our clients struggle with communication—whether in sign language, written communication, or English in general—which makes it difficult for them to fully understand their needs at the start of services. Because many come from backgrounds without strong language support, our staff often spend three times the usual effort to ensure clients receive the guidance and resources they need.

Program Services and Highlights of 2023

Thanksgiving Giveaway – CCDHH provided assistance to 10 families (approximately 43 people) through gift cards totaling \$1,700, funded by a grant, ensuring that families could celebrate with food on the table.

ASL Program – Our ASL classes continue to thrive, averaging 80 new students per session in ASL I and II. Each 10-week session is offered about three times a year. We could expand further if more qualified ASL instructors were available.

Tax Preparation Assistance – In March and April, we offered free tax preparation for 90 clients across three dates, specifically serving the Deaf community.

Statewide Mental Health Training – In partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Deaf Services Center in Columbus, CCDHH developed and delivered statewide training for mental health clinicians. In 2023, we trained 124 professionals through five workshops and launched an online training divided into three modules, offering continuing education credits. This training is now housed on the ODMHAS E-Based Academy.

Community Partnerships – We strengthened relationships with area businesses and organizations to provide education on Deaf culture, accessibility, and ASL training. New partnerships in 2023 included the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, Cleveland Cavaliers, American Greetings, Goodyear, and many more, with initiatives continuing into 2024 and beyond.

Deaf/Family-Friendly Social Events – With support from Advocate for Kids, we hosted nine well-attended family events. Favorites included zoo outings, ice cream socials, and a trip to Majestic Meadow. These events encourage Deaf children to interact with one another and help parents connect, fostering opportunities for future playdates and stronger community bonds.

Accessibility of Services

CCDHH serves clients at our main campus in University Circle, but we also meet clients in their neighborhoods when transportation or other barriers make it difficult for them to come to us. We continue to offer services virtually through Zoom and video phone for those who prefer remote support.

All CCDHH staff are fluent in American Sign Language, which is also the primary language of most of our employees. We have not encountered service challenges related to language or communication preferences. In addition to ASL classes, CCDHH provides services at no cost to our clients, community members, and partners.

CHSC also supports accessibility through the Audiology Patient Assistance Program (APA), which helps individuals obtain essential devices such as doorbell flashers, alarm clocks, and baby criers. In 2023, we served 22 clients through our Basic Needs Fund, which allows us to maintain a small pantry for groceries and household essentials. Clients may pick up food directly from our Center, or staff will deliver it to their homes if needed.

Staffing Model

At CCDHH, our staffing model is designed to reflect and honor the community we serve. The majority of our employees are members of the Deaf community, and we are humbled to carry forward the best practice of “Deaf serving Deaf.”

Just as linguistic and cultural competency is essential when serving racial and ethnic minority populations, it is equally important in serving Deaf individuals. Our approach is rooted in knowledge, awareness, and deep respect for Deaf culture and for American Sign Language (ASL) as a language equal in value to English.

All CCDHH staff are fluent in ASL and skilled in multiple communication modalities to meet the diverse needs of our clients—many of whom are not proficient in English and may have dysfluent or atypical language backgrounds.

Our team in 2023:

CCDHH Staff Team

Kate Slosar – Adult and Youth Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VR & Pre-ETS Services), providing job readiness training, job search and placement assistance, and ongoing job coaching.

Sandra Hatibovic – Part-time Deaf Advocate, offering violence prevention education and support within the criminal justice system.

Maria O’Neil-Ruddock – Part-time Advocate, leading community outreach efforts and providing training opportunities.

Aileen Reusche – Deaf Social Worker, serving through DDHSS (Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialized Services).

Rachel Leffel – Deaf Operations Manager, overseeing scheduling and ensuring the day-to-day cohesion of the team.

Todd Smith-Our Interpreter Agency supports our team by using American Sign Language to bridge communication between the Deaf and hearing communities.

The staff of CCDHH are guided by Timothy Skaggs, Director of the Community Center for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, who has proudly served in this role for four years.

ACTION PLANS for 2024

Provide DV/SV Training and ASL Instruction to CRCC

Explore Partnership with CCBDD – Continue to Develop and Promote DEAFinitely Learning

Continue to Work on Agency Accessibility Concerns and Challenges

Expand Mental Health and Deafness Training

Lobbyist for State Item Line Service for the Deaf to gain more support.

OVERVIEW IN NUMBERS for the Year 2023

CCD Hours 374

CCD Client- 38

VR Hours 973

VR Clients 104