

Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Evaluation Summary 2024

Summary of Services

What a year 2024 has been with all the moving we've accomplished! We successfully relocated to Parma Heights, established a new location, and are excited about the brighter future ahead. Despite the challenges of moving, we maintained our operations and I feel we've done a great job this year.

CHSC's Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) had a total of 97 active clients during 2024, with a amazing 877 hours of support with clients. The total number of service hours provided by CCDHH this year represents direct service hours expanding across all domains of service. Some clients benefitted from multiple services. Services in the CCDHH included: Community Support and Case Management, Vocational Rehabilitation (job readiness, job development, and job retention), Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Specialist, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Education and Training, Advocacy, Support for Victims and Survivors of Trauma and Abuse, American Sign Language Education, Community Events for Youth and Families.

Breakdown of Services: (NOTE: This is as of Nov 2024)

- VR Services-55 clients
- Pre-ETS-8 students
- Support Services-87 clients
- DV/SV Support/Advocacy Service clients -7
- Support Services and Advocacy- 83
- Advocates 4 Kids events – 8
- Community Events - 9
- Trainings/Workshops -6
- ASL Community Classes/Corportation total 806 students were taught.

Program/Service Highlights of 2024:

Our biggest milestone in 2024 was relocating from University Circle to our new home in Parma Heights. We're thrilled about this next chapter and eager to see where this journey takes us. Despite the move, we remained committed to providing services and hosting events. Here are some highlights from 2024!

With the move, we couldn't let our new building go unnoticed. In November, we hosted an exciting grand opening and open house to showcase our new space. While we initially had 60 people registered, over 100 attendees joined us on the big day! We even had the mayor of Parma Height, and other important people in the grand opening.

Following our grand opening, we were thrilled to be featured on Channel 5! President/CEO Dr. Vick and I had the opportunity to do a short interview, highlighting our new Parma Heights location. We're excited to see where this exposure will take us!

Deaf Tax Day got off to a challenging start this year due to a policy change that prevented onsite services. Instead, we had to quickly adapt by arranging for clients to visit their site. To ensure smooth communication, we provided ample interpreters, ensuring tax preparers were fully equipped to assist Deaf individuals. Despite the hurdles, we successfully helped 24 Deaf individuals complete their taxes.

One of our new community partners, the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, received CRCC Cultural Competency training to more effectively interface with Deaf clients. We also provided training to the University Circle Police Department, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the Family Justice Center, and Journey Center.

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Deaf Services Center in Columbus, our CCDHH developed a statewide training for mental health clinicians. In 2024 we trained Part one 106 attendees, and then we continue with part 2 62 mental health professionals and conducted 5 workshops. In addition, we developed an on-line training divided into three learning modules that provides clinicians with continuing education credits. This training is on the ODMHAS website on their E-based Academy. Dr. Jerry, and Dr. Ruddock, and are also working with Director Skaggs to create context for 2025!

We worked on a project titled *DEAFinitely Learning*, aimed at supporting daily living skills such as making healthy food choices, staying active, developing coping strategies, managing finances, and fostering healthy relationships. While we continue to host a limited number of classes, we are hopeful for renewed funding to expand the program. Unfortunately, we did not receive the same financial support as last year. Despite that, we still continue to grow. Last year we averaged about 7 attendance per class, this year it went up about 10.

The ASL Family Events and Advocates 4 Kids Programming hosted an exciting lineup of events this year, including Monster Night Hockey, Majestic Meadow Farm visits, a Guardian baseball game, Adventure Factory outings, Mitchell's Ice Cream trips, gingerbread cookie decorating, splash pad fun, and Urban Air adventures. These activities brought together a total of 113 attendees so far! And we're not finished yet—there's still one more event to come in 2024!

After a brief hiatus, we are excited to reintroduce the D.A.C. (Deaf Action Committee) with a fresh focus and renewed energy. This important committee will work to bridge gaps in the healthcare system for the Deaf community, addressing critical disparities—some of which affect Deaf individuals at three times the rate of the general population.

Our primary goal is to educate the community about diabetes, as there is a significant need for greater understanding of this condition. To launch 2025, we will host a presentation by a

diabetes expert and continue building on this momentum with initiatives such as educational vlogs, in-person events, workshops, and more. We are dedicated to making a meaningful impact through learning and outreach.

Shopping Days returned for its second year, and we successfully supported 58 families. Our goal was to gather donations of items such as clothes, toys, crafts, blankets, and more, and we were thrilled to provide these gifts to those in need.

We recently launched efforts to support the DeafBlind community and hosted a DeafBlind event with 17 attendees, including 5 DeafBlind individuals. The event was filled with socializing, crafting, and enjoying food, making it a very successful gathering.

Our ASL program had a standout year, with significant growth in both community and business classes. In community classes, we successfully taught 133 individuals. Our business classes saw tremendous growth, with 865 employees trained on how to work with Deaf individuals, understand Deaf culture, and learn signs tailored to their specific business needs. We had a few companies who used us repeatedly. A few big names like Goodyear, CMHA, VGA, and Laketec.

Staffing Model

Our staffing model at the Community Center is designed to reflect the community we serve. Most of our CCDHH employees are members of the Deaf community themselves, and we are honored to serve the D/deaf community in northeast Ohio. Our approach embodies the best practices of "deaf serving deaf," recognizing that linguistic and cultural competency are essential when serving any minority group. Just as it is important to understand the cultural and linguistic needs of racial and ethnic minorities, it is equally important to serve Deaf individuals with knowledge, awareness, and respect for Deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL), which we view as a language equal in value to English.

All of our staff are fluent in ASL and skilled in other communication methods to meet the diverse needs of our clients, many of whom are not proficient in English but may have dysfluent or atypical language patterns.

Our 2024 team includes:

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

- **Sandra Hatibovic** – Part-time Deaf Advocate, offering violence prevention education and support within the criminal justice system.
- **Aileen Reusche** – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Specialist (DDHHSS).
- **Rachel Leffel** – Deaf Operations Manager, overseeing scheduling and day-to-day operations to ensure team cohesion.
- **Maria O’Neil-Ruddock** – Community Outreach Specialist.
- **Todd Smith** – Staff Interpreter.
- Timothy Skaggs- Director for the Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Action Plan for 2025

Our Action Plan for 2025 include the following:

- Provide Mentorship and Training to CCDHH
- Revision of the Client satisfaction Survey
- Provide DV/SV Trainings and ASL Instruction to CRCC.
- Explore Partnership with Flagstar– Continue to Develop and Promote DEAFinitely Learning
- Continue to Work on Agency Accessibility Concerns and Challenges
- Expand Mental Health and Deafness Training- OMHAS.
- Expand D.A.C and promote diabetic.