



ANNUAL REPORT

New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

FISCAL YEAR 2025

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2025

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Letter from the Executive Director

G. Nathan Gomme

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico
State Capitol Building
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Suite 400
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Madame Governor,

The State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides effective leadership, education, advocacy and a variety of programs to reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural and intellectual well-being of Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf with additional disabilities and Hard of Hearing New Mexicans and their families, friends and colleagues.

Fiscal Year 2025 was a defining year for the New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing (NMCDHH), characterized by significant leadership transitions, legislative advocacy, and a dedicated push toward technological modernization. As we close this chapter and look toward FY26, we are pleased to share a summary of our collective efforts and the quantifiable impact we have made together:

Year in Review: By the Numbers Our commitment to serving New Mexico is best reflected in the statistics from FY25. Despite challenges, our agency exceeded several key performance targets:

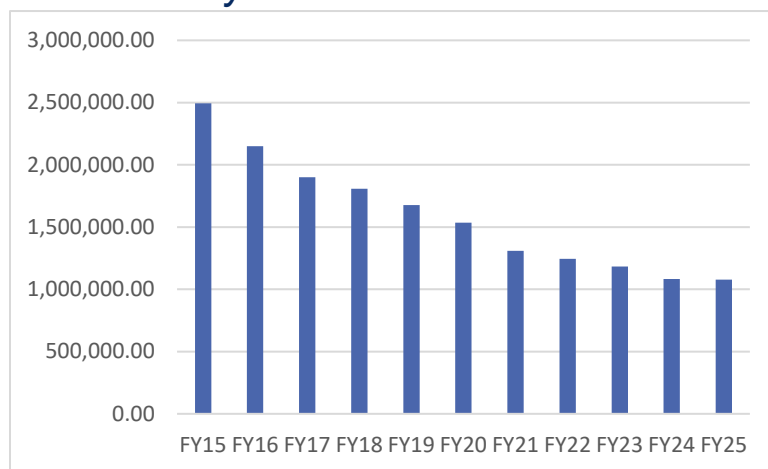
- **Barriers Addressed:** Staff addressed **22,928 communication barriers**, achieving **110%** of our annual target.
- **Technology Distributed:** Through the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP), we distributed **1,279 pieces of accessible equipment**, reaching **120%** of our goal.
- **Community Education:** We hosted **155 workshops and training sessions** (115% of target) and coordinated **140 outreach events** (115% of target), significantly increasing our presence across the state.
- **Relay Services:** Consistent with national trends, traditional relay usage continued to decline. This shift underscores the importance of our pivot toward modern, internet-based communication solutions. In recent discussions with national leaders, we anticipate that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will be announcing some substantial changes to the makeup in the first or second quarter of the upcoming FY26 fiscal year of relay services. These changes could have an impact on the potential usage of our budget from the Relay surcharge or remove the mandate all together. If the usage parameters

change for our funding, it will be determined before the next FCC recertification period in July of 2028. We look forward to explaining this matter in upcoming board meetings and at our next legislative session.

Legislative and Budgetary Updates Our agency looked to improve outcomes for our Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Speech Disabled community by working during the 2025 Legislative Session to secure the resources necessary for our community's growth and stability.

- **Funding Success:** Thanks to legislative support, the increased appropriation in House Bill 2 to support the Support Service Provider (SSP) and Communication Facilitator (CF) programs was successfully continued.
- **Outcomes created for FY26:** Earlier in the year, high demand for Support Service Providers' hours created some difficulties in providing the amount of services we expected throughout the year. We are proud to announce that, due to the legislative support, the service hours situation has already improved, and we anticipate increased service hours for our most vulnerable populations in FY26.
- In addition, thanks to Legislative support, we will also see a special audit conducted to address long-time revenue challenges and anticipate some level of funding recoup on FY25 collections for our revenue.
- **Revenue Structure:** Senate Bill 535 passed, altering the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge to 1.66%. This revenue will be split between the 988 Lifeline Program and our agency. While this creates a different funding mechanism, we remain vigilant regarding long-term revenue trends. We will be reporting on the details in the upcoming fiscal year.

Relay NM Revenue FY15 to FY25



Revenue has fallen from 2,494,668 in FY15 to 1,077,118 in FY25. A decline of 1,417,550.

- **Advocacy:** While House Bill 49 (Closed Captioning) and House Bill 120 (Accessibility Act) did not become law this session, they successfully raised awareness within the legislature regarding the critical need for communication access.

Communication Facilitator Program Highlights and Modernization

Communication Facilitator (CF) Program: New Mexico became the **fourth state** to implement a formal CF program, assisting DeafBlind and Deaf individuals with Additional Disabilities in accessing video telecommunications. Our program is quickly garnering national attention as we seek to make it one of the best in the nation.

- **Pilot Launch & Training (Q1):** The program launched as a pilot with a focus on establishing a clear distinction between Communication Facilitators and Support Service Providers (SSPs). Extensive training curricula were developed covering confidentiality, ethics, and specific facilitation techniques like "mirroring" rather than interpreting.
- **Operational Setup (Q2):** To ensure user privacy and neutrality, the program secured a dedicated office space at Bilingual Multicultural Services, Inc., separate from other agency operations. This space was equipped with necessary technology, such as dual-monitor TVs and video phones.
- **Service Expansion (Q3-Q4):** The program saw rapid adoption, growing from 74 requests in the second quarter to 235 requests in the fourth quarter. By year's end, the program had fulfilled 457 requests and provided over 600 hours of service.
- **Enhancement & Outreach: Haptics Training:** The program integrated Haptics training (touch signals) to help facilitators convey environmental and visual information to DeafBlind users more effectively.
- **Public Awareness:** A Public Service Announcement (PSA) video was produced and released to educate the community on the program's benefits and scope.

What Makes New Mexico's Program Different:

- **Integrated Haptics:** The program is unique in its formal integration of Haptics training, funding specific workshops to teach facilitators how to provide "backchannel" visual and environmental information through touch.
- **Dedicated Neutral Space:** Unlike models that might rely solely on in-home visits, New Mexico established a secure, neutral office location specifically to guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of users' legal, medical, or personal calls. This is in addition to the in-home visits that may be needed.

Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program

Technology Distribution: We are actively addressing the "Analog to Digital" transition, educating the community on how modern infrastructure impacts legacy equipment. We modernized our catalog to include more Android and Apple devices and are finalizing a

secure online application portal to streamline access. We are looking at the legacy equipment to find comparable and supported digital alternatives.

- **Android Integration:** For the first time, the program expanded beyond Apple products to include **Pixel Smartphones and Tablets** for users comfortable with the Android operating system. This opens the door for users to integrate some tools that are only found on Android devices to be utilized. Some of the tools are highly versatile and can operate without internet access and as such are viable tools to be used in rural areas as possible substitutes for traditional relay services.
- **New Hardware:** The catalog was updated to include the **Amplicomm PowerTel 3355** landline phone and new wearable alerting devices.
- **Captioning Glasses Pilot:** In Q4, the program began securing devices for a pilot program involving captioning glasses. Two versions of the device were acquired to test different display styles, with a third version being secured for continued testing in early FY26.
- **Discontinued Tech:** The program actively removed older analog technology that is no longer supported or available due to manufacturing barriers.
- **Online Application Portal:** The agency worked with our equipment vendor to develop a secure online application portal. By Q4, the portal had passed stress tests and was being finalized for a launch in English and Spanish. This portal streamlines the submission of required documents and speeds up order processing.
- **Analog to Digital Transition Education:** Staff partnered with our relay vendor to create and distribute educational flyers (in English and Spanish) explaining how modern digital infrastructure affects legacy equipment like TTYs and voice-carry-over (VCO) phones. This initiative aims to prevent users from losing relay service as carriers upgrade their lines.

Accessibility: We are nearing **100% compliance** with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure our digital presence is equitable for all by the April 2026 federal deadline. In order to both continue our work with accessibility and with the evolution of technology, members of our team including myself have been keen on attending and learning topics such as:

- **AI in Wearable Technology**
- **AI Ethics in Persons with Disabilities**
- **WCAG Requirements for State and Local Agencies**
- **Accessibility and Inclusion in Media**

Leadership Transitions This year marked a significant change in leadership within our Community Engagement Department. After 17 years of dedicated service, Lisa Dignan retired in November 2024. We were thrilled to welcome Amy Bourque as the new Director of Community Engagement in the third quarter.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals in New Mexico through advocacy, education, and resource development.

G. Nathan Gomme

G. Nathan Gomme
NMCDHH Executive Director

Letter from Chair

John Hooper

Almost a quarter century, the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff have worked hard to provide services to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and speech disabled members of our community. Looking back now as my third year as Chair of the Board for NMCDHH, I have been able to see firsthand how the Commission's services continue to be utilized throughout the state, and how staff have worked to spread critical and accessible information regarding our services and programs to every corner of the state. With offices in Albuquerque and Las Cruces, I have also seen how the Commission's staff have worked tirelessly to continue supporting our community and address communication barriers that have been encountered at both an individual and systematic level.

Our Executive Director, Nathan Gomme, and the staff of the Commission also continue to work closely with individuals, corporations, and agencies in the field of accessible technology, to address issues regarding how to improve and expand access for our community in the technology of choice, and to enable our constituents to receive basic technological necessities or utilize existing resources in an improved form. These shortcomings in access, and to information, can be problematic, and required addressing throughout the state, in order to avoid the sense of "disconnect" or lack of communication access, that members of our community frequently encounter. Broadband internet access is a key part of addressing this issue, and an area in which we are seeing success and progress, and will continue to improve and expand services for several years to come. Access to communication services, like NM Relay, is also critically important to rural members of our community. With the legislative changes to our funding, and anticipated changes to FCC requirements, the NMCDHH work is vital to bring more digital and technological possibilities to New Mexicans. We must remain vigilant to ensure that services that impact our Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, such as the web and NM Relay, remain accessible, and adaptable.

Commission staff are continuing to work to ensure they are at the forefront of accommodations, both physical and digital, with the new coming requirements for Web Content and Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and the changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II. Part of this access work also means working with our local hospitals and Emergency Medical Services, which is evidenced in the report with our collaborations with various police departments around the state, and several hospital systems.

The Commission staff and the Executive Director continue to reach out to various agencies on every level, from federal government to state legislature and to the county and local governments. Staff work both to educate, and learn from our communities, in order to address the shortcomings experienced by many members of the Hearing Loss

community throughout the state. The Commission has worked to keep their virtual presence strong through its webpage, Facebook, and email newsletter, as well as through their social media accounts updated frequently with the most current information available on subjects covering a wide range of topics; from evaluating the current equipment of the Telecommunications Equipment Program, providing resources to the most updated information for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind, and information regarding the advocacy work being done in providing information on communication access, education on hearing loss and other tools/resources.

The work continues on the ground level, with Commission staff working with a broad variety of organizations and entities. Some of these interactions involve training and outreach programs, which serve to educate those who do not have hearing loss, about resources and accommodations that are to be made readily available for their employees or their patrons with hearing loss. Commission staff provide expert guidance and support to these organizations as needed. As New Mexico is the fifth largest state in our nation, we still have a lot of ground to cover! Your continued support helps us continue to reach out and help those in need. With this support, the Commission can continue to bridge gaps in communication, and access, and allow our constituents to collaborate with each other more effectively, through technology and education; making this state, your state, a state of equality.

Sincerely,

John Hooper

John Hooper, NMCDHH Board Chair



Agency Overview

Purpose

The State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NMCDHH) was established by the New Mexico Legislature (NMSA 1978 §28-11B-2) to promote services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind throughout New Mexico.

Mission Statement

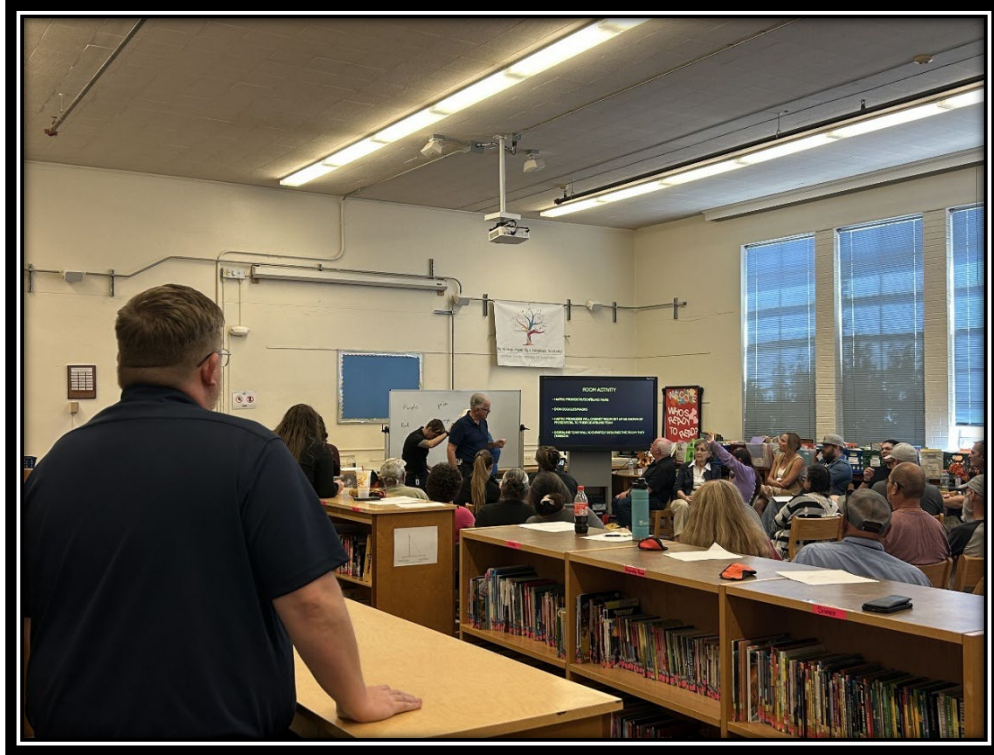
The New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides effective leadership, education, advocacy, and programs to reduce barriers to the social, economic, educational, cultural, and intellectual well-being of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind New Mexicans and their families, friends, and colleagues.

Vision Statement – “Impact and Empower”

The State of New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a dynamic resource that will enhance the quality of life for Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens of New Mexico by being:

- ✓ The recognized advocate in important issues impacting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community
- ✓ The proactive provider of innovative programs and services
- ✓ The statewide umbrella and information clearinghouse for interested individuals, organizations, agencies and institutions

NMCDHH Activities during FY 2025.



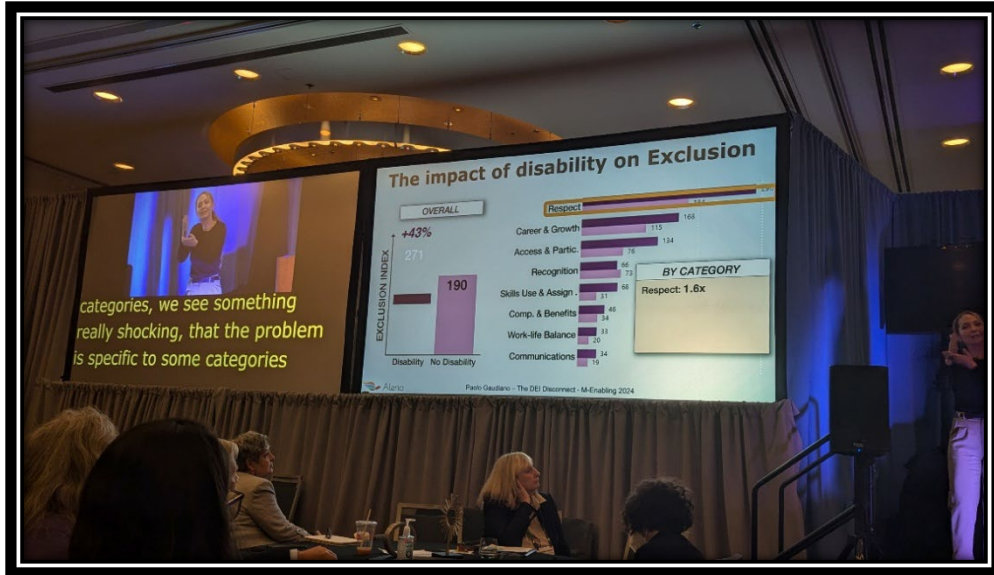
Executive Director Gomme attended the Haptics training along with Support Service Providers and other members of our community.



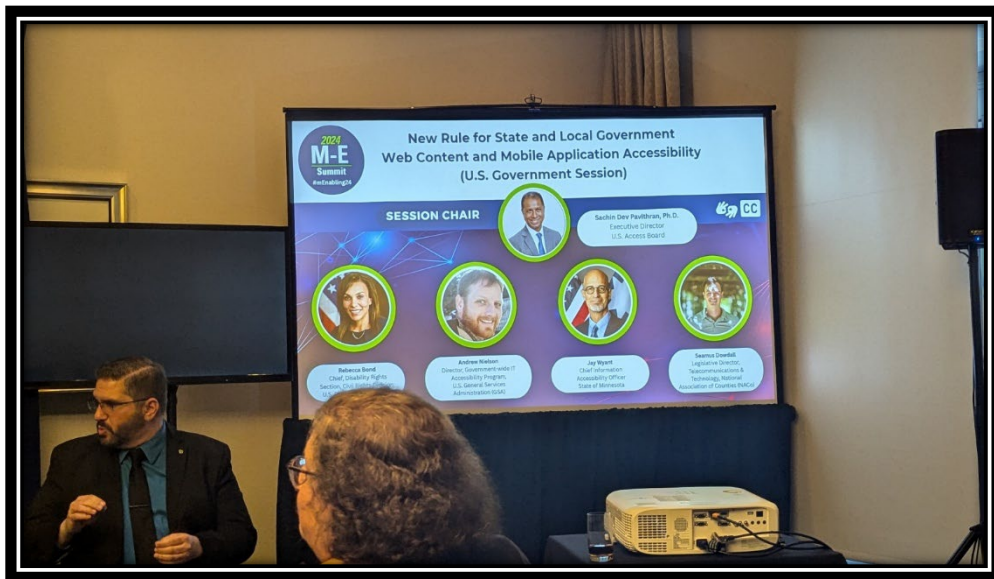


Executive Director Gomme's work with the legislature and other agencies has allowed for accessible legislative hearings for members of the public, and he continues to attend important community events, such as the New Mexico Disability Pride Day celebration.





Attendance at conferences like M-Enabling in Washington D.C., has allowed Commission staff to stay knowledgeable about upcoming changes to accessibility requirements under the ADA





NMCDHH staff worked throughout the state to host Workshops, presentations, and Town Halls, on topics related to the hearing loss community about accessibility and addressing communication barriers.

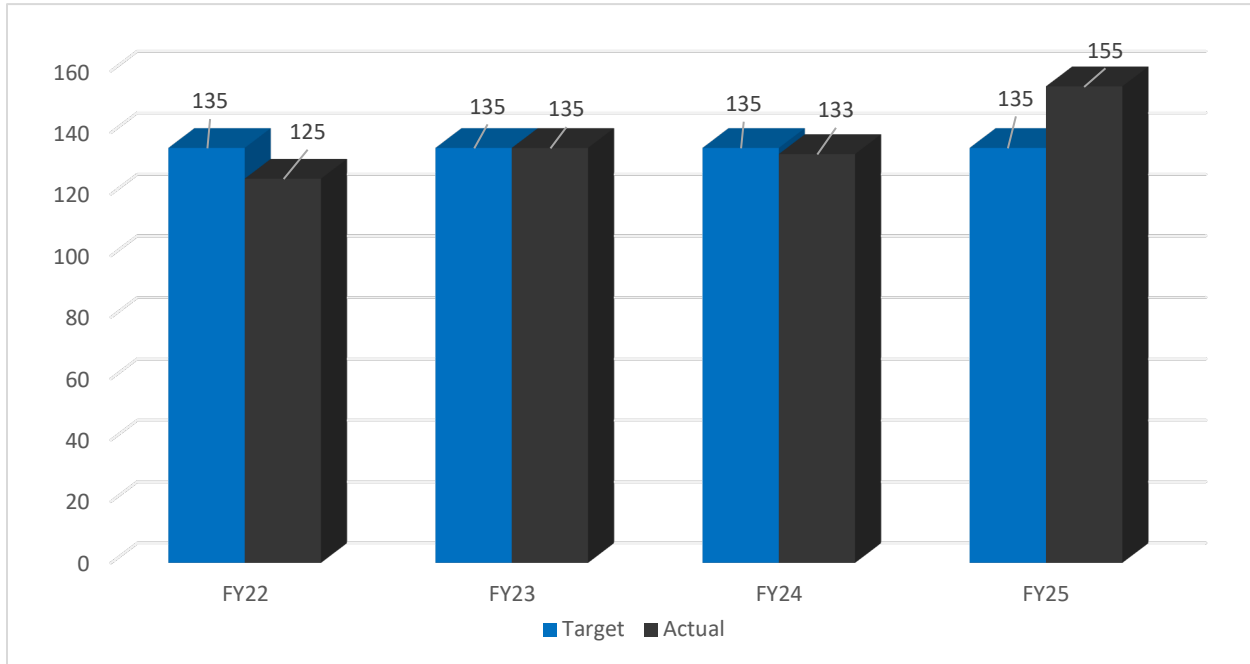




NMCDHH staff from both offices met in Albuquerque in July 2024 for training and updates on policies and procedures.

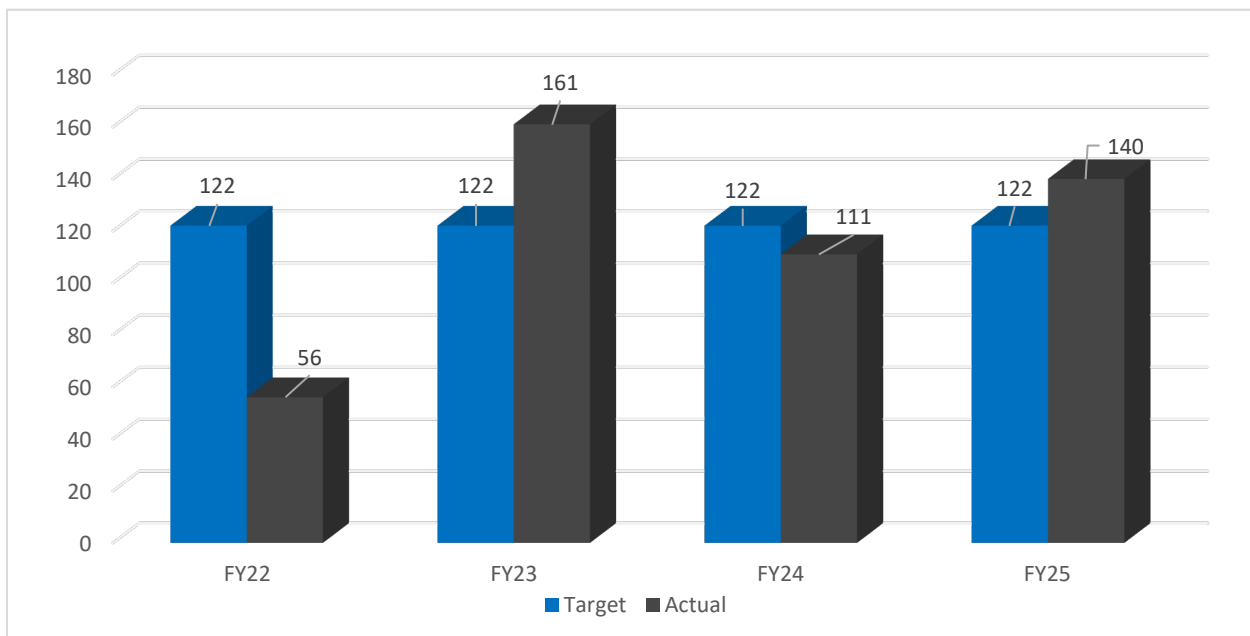
Legislative Performance Measures

Number of Workshops & Training Sessions – 115%



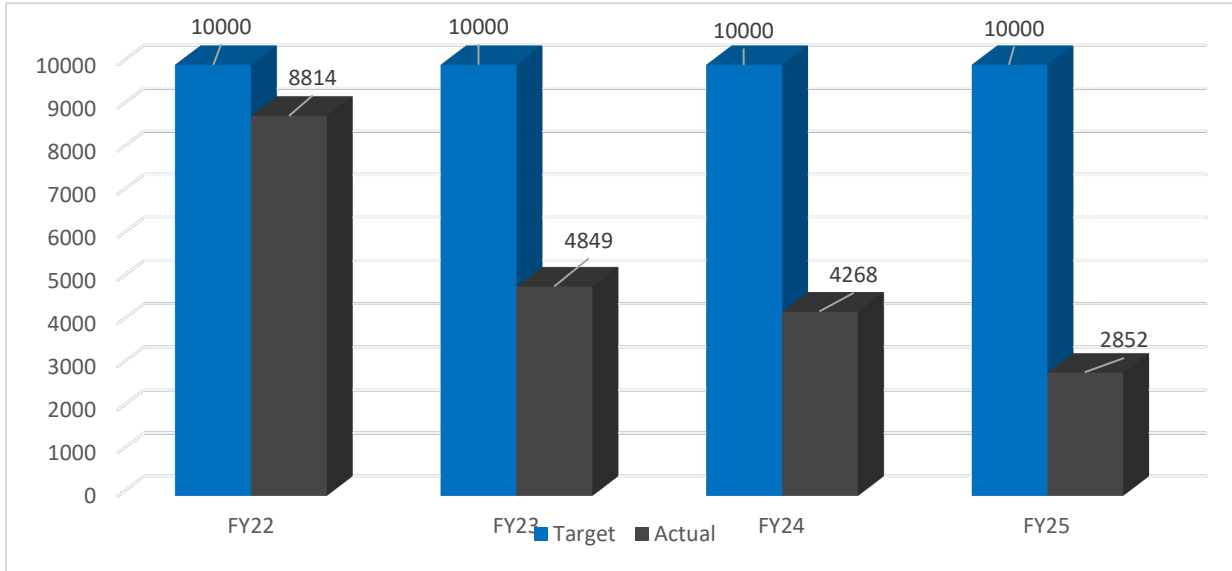
NMCDH hosted 155 Workshops and Training Sessions in FY25, 115% of our target of 135.

Number of Outreach Events Coordinated – 115% of FY25 Target



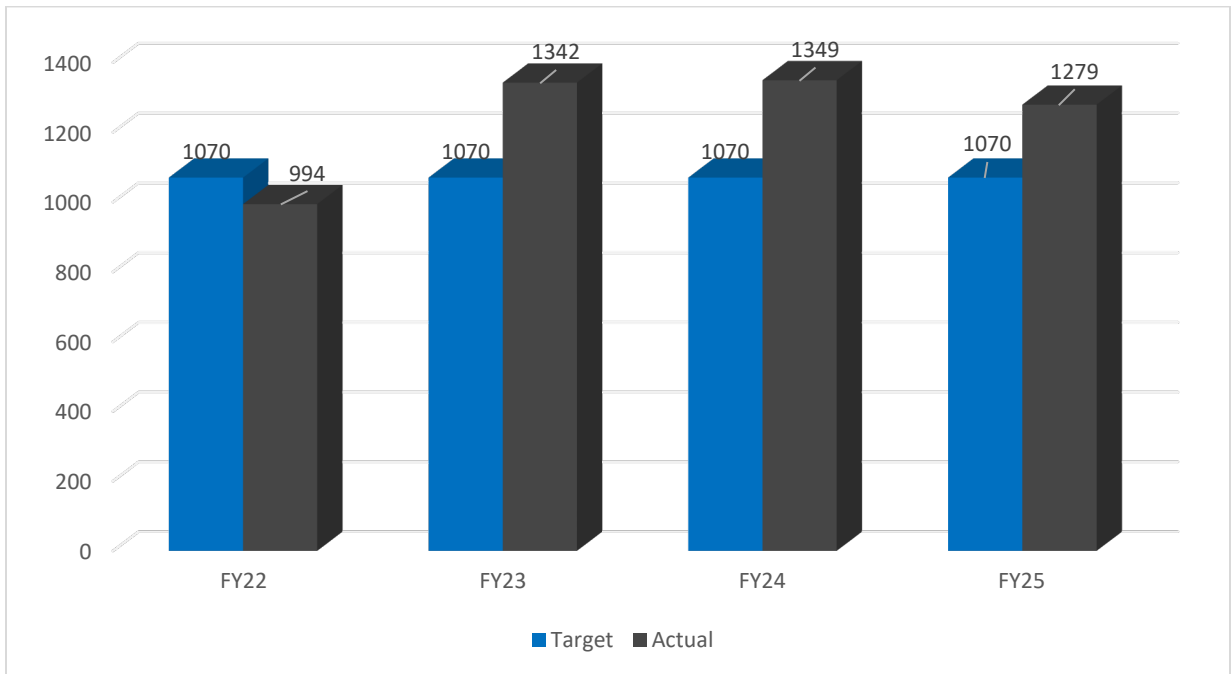
NMCDH coordinated 140 outreach events in FY25, 115% of our target of 122.

Average Number of Relay Minutes per Month – 29% of FY25 Target



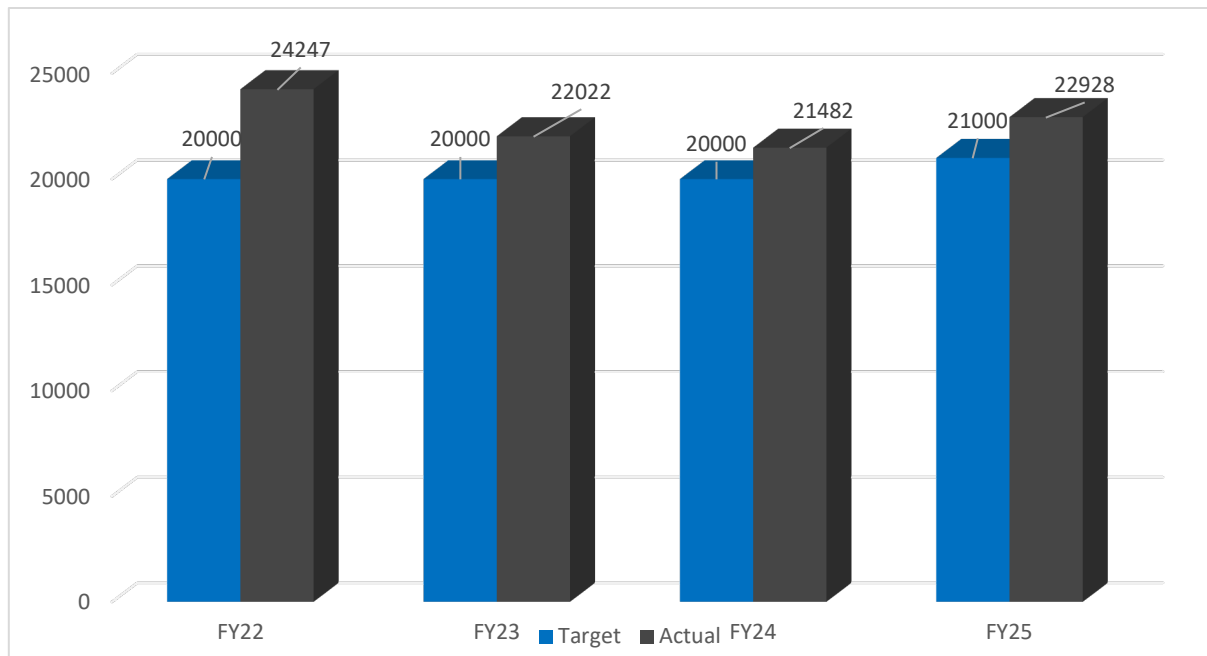
The average number of relay minutes per month in FY25 was 2,852. This was 29% of our target of 10,000 minutes per month. More information about the relay number and challenges can be found in the Executive Director Report.

Number of Accessible Technology Distributions – 120% of FY25 Target



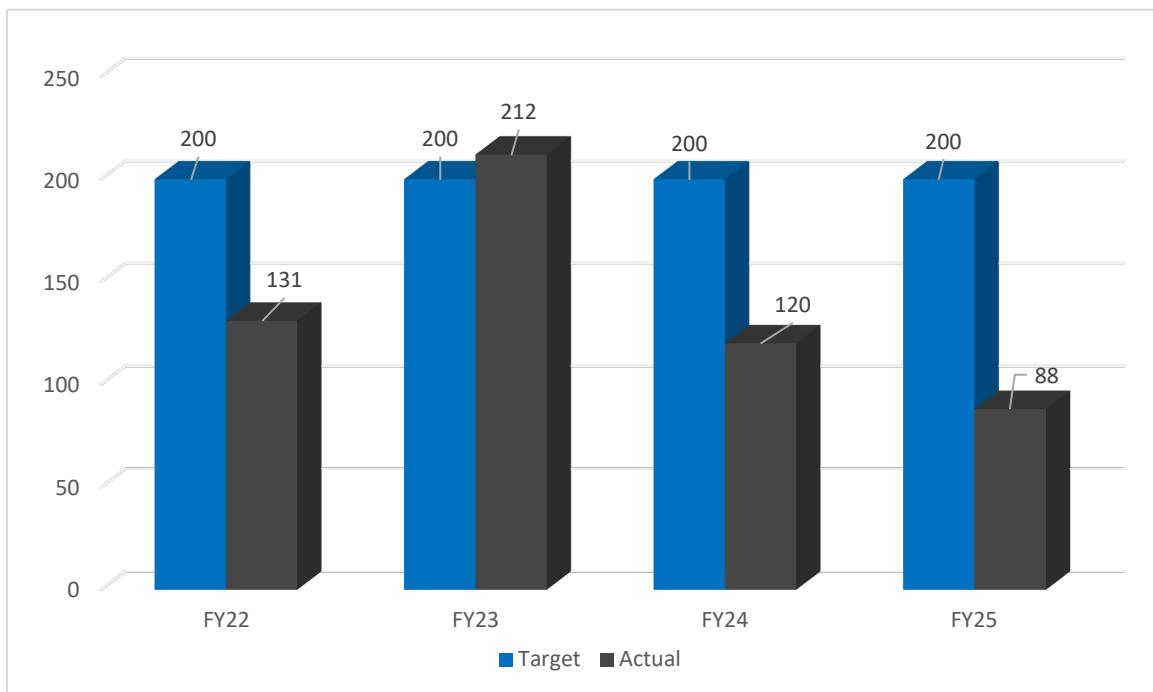
NMCDH distributed 1,279 items of equipment in FY25, 120% of our target of 1,070.

Number of Communication Barriers Addressed – 110% of FY 25 Target



NMCDH addressed 22,928 communication barriers in FY25, 110% of our target of 21,000.

Number of Interpreters in CDHH Sponsored Professional Development – 44% of FY25 Target



88 Interpreters participated in NMCDH sponsored Professional Development, 44% of our target of 200.

NMCDHH Outreach FY25

NMCDHH attended numerous booths across the state to provide one-on-one information and one-stop education regarding equipment for telecommunications and information about our agency. Health and wellness fairs, food banks and school districts all over the state have proven to be positive places where participants learn more about the telecommunications equipment that NMCDHH provides. Combined, the Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices, and Hamilton Relay, attended 140 booths, with 11,020 booth visitors.

Location Trends

- **Regional Reach:** Beyond the urban areas, staff frequently traveled to surrounding and rural communities to ensure broader coverage. Key locations included:
 - Anthony, Chaparral, Hatch, La Mesa, Mesilla, Mesquite, Radium Springs, Silver City, Truth or Consequences, Tularosa, Vado, Bernalillo, Clovis, Cuba, Edgewood, Farmington, Fort Sumner, Los Lunas, Pecos, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe, and Tijeras.
- **Venue Types:**
 - **Food Pantries & Churches:** Food pantries (e.g., Casa De Peregrinos, Salvation Army) and churches were visited with consistency, targeting underserved populations directly where they access essential resources.
 - **Senior Centers:** Outreach often targeted senior centers (e.g., Munson, Silver City, North Valley, Highland) to reach the aging population most likely to benefit from telecommunications equipment and some of our other services with hearing loss often occurring as we age.
 - **Educational Institutions:** Staff attended transition fairs and career expos at high schools (e.g., Rio Rancho, Cuba) and colleges (e.g., CNM, UNM), focusing on youth and young adults who have hearing loss.

Event Trends

- **Resource & Support Focus:** The majority of events were resource-oriented, such as food distributions and agency resource fairs, allowing staff to connect directly with individuals who might need assistive technology or advocacy services as they seek additional services.
- **Health & Wellness:** There was a strong presence at health fairs and wellness expos (e.g., Sandia Wellness & Safety Fair, La Vida Felicidad), aligning hearing health with general well-being.

- **Professional & Industry Conferences:** Staff attended professional conferences (e.g., NM Occupational Therapy Association, UNM Health Professions Symposium) to educate other service providers about the commission's work.
- **Specific Community Targeting:**
 - **Veterans:** Events like "Patriot Palooza" and VA clinic booths specifically targeted veterans.
 - **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Community:** Events like "ASL Family Fun Night," "Deaf Town Hall," and "NMSD Homecoming" were directly aimed at the core constituency.
 - **Employment:** Career fairs (e.g., "Heroes Hiring Heroes") were attended to support employment opportunities for the community.







Programs & Services

Community Advocacy

Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy

The Department of Community Advocacy (DCA) provides individual advocacy, system advocacy, community education, outreach, the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) and state-wide relay services. NMCDHH partners with several state, local, and county agencies as well as businesses to collaborate on services for all people with communication disabilities and participate in special projects. The department continues to work with law enforcement, healthcare providers and hospitals, and conducts training on communication access for all types of agencies and businesses throughout the State of New Mexico.

There are six positions in two offices for the department.

- Albuquerque Office
 - Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy
 - Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist
 - Dennis Stidham, Community Advocacy Specialist
 - Myra Sandoval, Community Advocacy Specialist

- Las Cruces Office
 - Jennifer Dahlgren, Community Advocacy Specialist (Vacant, as of Q4)
 - Susana Santillan, Community Advocacy Specialist

Individual and System Advocacy

The Department of Community Advocacy (DCA) provides advocacy services on an individual level and a systems level to confront communication barriers in employment, government, legal, business and healthcare settings. NMCDHH further advocates ensuring that entities comply with statewide and federal disability regulations and laws.

Individuals in need of advocacy services are assigned to a Community Advocacy Specialist who will provide one-on-one services to the constituent until the issue is resolved. This includes advocating for effective communication access and coordinating services through other agencies to alleviate issues. Community Advocacy staff work with public and private entities to ensure all consumers are provided effective communication access. Our educational videos can be found on our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/@NMCDHH.

For FY25, our Community Advocacy staff worked throughout the year to improve outcomes for our hearing loss community. Advocacy staff worked with over 327 individuals on advocacy cases from all four corners of the state during FY25.

Healthcare

Advocacy staff worked around the state to address communication barriers encountered by the hearing loss community when working with medical facilities. As the DeafBlind community in New Mexico continues to expand, it is important for medical facilities to understand the different types of interpreting services that are available, such as on-site and Video Remote Interpreting. Each type of interpreting, may not be suitable for each individual. For example, for individuals who have visual disabilities, they may not be able to see an Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) on a small screen, they may require tactile interpreting. To further this education, Advocacy staff hosted a Town Hall meeting with Christus St. Vincent, to address the concerns of our Northern New Mexico hearing loss community. We are hoping in the future to host additional listening sessions with other healthcare systems around the state, and especially in more rural areas that have limited access and resources.

In addressing communication barriers with individuals on the Developmental Disabilities Waiver, our advocacy staff have been able to host meetings and discussions with the New Mexico Healthcare Authority (NMHA), and will be providing additional trainings on topics such as Deaf Sensitivity, in FY26. Staff also worked with University of New Mexico Hospital regarding their wayfinding videos, designed to improve access and communication for patients, and this year had the opportunity to work with medical professionals who themselves have a hearing loss, which enhances access and understanding for our community.

Law Enforcement and Courts

Staff continue to be actively engaged with Police Departments around the state. As a result of a visit by Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Robb to an Albuquerque Police Department (APD) Coffee with a Cop event, they were able to network and began working on plans to host a Coffee with a Cop event, specifically for our hearing loss community. This effort has also involved Mx. Bourque, and Ms. Eubank from the Community Engagement Department. Due to logistical challenges, the event had to be postponed until FY26. The Community Engagement Department did successfully launch the long-term Placard Project, which provides drivers with hearing loss placards for communication with police and emergency medical services. Informational vlogs were shared with the community late in FY25, and the first placard will be issued early in FY26.

Advocacy staff worked with several local facilities to ensure that individuals with hearing loss received appropriate communication access across all levels of the judicial system, including, detention/court hearings, and witness depositions. These barriers occurred both on-site, and on virtual platforms. We also work to address communication barriers that occur between clients and attorneys and help both parties to understand their rights and responsibilities under the ADA.

Transition

Transition services continue to be an area addressed by the Commission. Ms. Gutiérrez participated in the Partnership for Career Readiness (PCR) program hosted by the

National Deaf Center. She attended the meeting in Austin, Texas and during the event. In collaborating with other local attendees, they recognized the persistent challenges in this area, they agreed on the need to reestablish the Interagency Transition Agency (ITA) to unite stakeholders in creating actionable goals and plans to better support students with hearing loss. Ms. Gutiérrez will be working on this in FY26.

Ms. Gutiérrez also met with and presented to the American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC) to discuss Deaf advocacy, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Other staff members met with various school systems to address communication barriers in the classroom, and with school-related meetings, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Workforce

Community Advocates worked with a wide range of both private and corporate businesses, to educate them about ADA Title II, to improve workplace accessibility. We also coordinate with other state resources such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, to support individuals and organizations with ongoing resources and connections with employment. This critical work allows us to educate and work with businesses to address accessibility and communication, and opens new avenues for people with disabilities in the workspace.

The Director of Community Advocacy, Corina Gutiérrez, worked with many organizations, businesses, and community members during FY25.

Here are some of her highlights:

- Participated in the New Mexico Gender Affirming Care Symposium, held in October in Albuquerque, which offered a variety of excellent workshops. One participant, a doctor who is also an ASL interpreter, provided insightful explanations that deepened her understanding of gender-affirming care. Overall, the symposium proved to be highly informative and beneficial and provided an opportunity to network with diverse participants, fostering valuable connections throughout the event.
- Worked with a mental health counseling service that supports several individuals in need of ASL interpreters for their therapy sessions and meetings. She provided them with a fact sheet on how to find American Signed Language (ASL) interpreters. As a result, the service successfully arranged ASL interpreters for the individuals.
- Established a collaboration with representatives from Hands United, a non-profit organization that supports immigrant families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, and the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. Ms. Gutiérrez connected them with her department and used the opportunity to discuss how to support individuals in New Mexico who may need referrals for immigration-related services.
- Ms. Gutiérrez remains one of the only Deaf Self-Advocacy (DSAT) Trainers in the nation, and conducted several training sessions in FY26.

- Continued to actively engage in monthly/quarterly meetings with the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force. Ms. Gutiérrez worked with a DeafBlind artist who enthusiastically agreed to develop three logos for the NM DeafBlind Task Force organization. We met several times to discuss various design ideas. The artist was very excited about creating the logos and will remain in contact with Ms. Gutiérrez.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Myra Sandoval, worked with many community members on several different cases.

Here are some of her highlights:

- Worked with a small local theater to ensure that they provided ASL interpreters for a Deaf individual to attend a performance.
- Worked with Adult Protective Services to ensure they provided effective communication access by providing an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual with Additional Disabilities.
- Worked with the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) to ensure ASL interpreters were provided for two Deaf individuals taking their written driver's license exams.
- Worked with a Deaf with Additional Disabilities individual, to ensure effective communication access with their apartment complex to address a complaint.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Dennis Stidham, worked with many community members on several different cases.

Here are some of his highlights:

- Worked with the father of a Deaf with Additional Disabilities individual to ensure that a non-profit organization provided an ASL interpreter for the individual's evaluation appointment, after initially requesting that the father interpret. Mr. Stidham worked with the organization, educating them about their obligation under ADA Title III, and how it is not appropriate to use a family member as an interpreter in situations like these.
- Assisted a DeafBlind individual who faced challenges advocating for themselves with a local event center regarding the provision of tactile interpreters. Although the individual had purchased front-row seats, the event coordinator attempted to move them to a different location, citing concerns that the interpreters would block the aisle. Mr. Stidham intervened and explained to the supervisor that the individual required specific accommodation due to both vision and hearing loss. The situation was resolved successfully, and the individual was able to remain in their original seat with appropriate access.
- Assisted a Hard of Hearing individual and their landlord regarding accessible communication technology at their apartment. Mr. Stidham educated them on accommodation requirements and communication access needs. He also shared information on how to obtain appropriate accommodations.

Community Education

Information, recommendations, workshops, and potential solutions are offered on topics such as Deaf Sensitivity, Effective Communication, Assistive Technology, an overview of the New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) to private and public agencies, professional organizations, retail organizations, businesses, and individuals. Often this work is done by our Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb. Other members of NMCDHH, or one of our vendors, will also provide this specialized training, as appropriate. Training was provided via variety of platforms.

- The Community Education Specialist, Roger Robb, his colleagues and Hamilton Relay, our Relay vendor, provided 155 presentations/trainings during FY25. This exceeded our target of 135.
- Mr. Robb produced and disseminated 4 vlogs.
 - Placard for Hearing Loss Community vlog
 - NM Driver with Hearing Loss Placard vlog
 - FY 2024 Mid-Year Report Vlog
 - Christus St Vincent Town Hall Event Vlog

LAS CRUCES SATELLITE OFFICE

Advocacy Specialists, Susana Santillan and Jennifer Dahlgren, served people in Southern New Mexico by providing individual and systemic advocacy and service coordination. They worked to remove communication barriers between the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community and public and private entities, including government and law enforcement agencies, courts, and medical facilities.

The specialists provided information and referral services, and worked with ADA coordinators, the Department of Health, New Mexico Workforce Connection, United Healthcare Medicare Brokers, and various nonprofit and private entities. Ms. Santillan also hosted booths to connect with the community.

Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2025

Community Advocacy Specialist, Susana Santillan, worked with community members on several different cases.

Here are some of her highlights:

- Continued to assist the Southern New Mexico hearing loss community by participating in networking meetings in Southern New Mexico (virtually and in person). She provided resources that assisted organizations with how to appropriately accommodate the hearing loss community and assisted with information regarding the NMCDHH services.
- Continued collaboration with local agencies to share employment opportunities and other relevant information with the hearing loss community.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual to ensure they had communication access when making a report to law enforcement. An officer did not initially request an ASL interpreter for the Deaf individual and wanted to use a family member to facilitate communication. Ms. Santillan contacted the officer's supervisor and discussed the situation, mentioning the Americans Disability Act (ADA) and referencing effective communication and using a licensed ASL interpreter. The supervisor thanked Ms. Santillan for the assistance she provided and confirmed an interpreter had arrived at the scene. The Deaf individual was happy with the outcome.
- Ms. Santillan provided system coordination assistance to a Social Security Administration (SSA) representative in Southwest New Mexico. The representative had a claimant that was requesting interpreter services and the representative wanted to know if NMCDHH provides this service. Ms. Santillan discussed Title II of the ADA and provided the NMCDHH Fact Sheets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II, Who Pays for Interpreters, and How to Find a Signed Language Interpreter.

Community Advocacy Specialist, Jennifer Dahlgren, worked with community members on several different cases.

Here are some of their highlights:

- Advocated for a Deaf individual in communicating with Social Security and the Human Services Department (HSD) using a UbiDuo device.
- Served on the City of Las Cruces ADA Advisory committee.
- Worked with several local medical clinics and doctors' offices to ensure that effective communication access was received by individuals with hearing loss, through methods that were appropriate for each individual.
- Worked with a DVR contractor to advocate for a Deaf individual with Additional Disabilities, clarifying responsibility for providing communication access during the job search, on-the-job training, and meetings with the case worker. As a result, an interpreter was provided for this individual.

Support Service Provider Program

Vancro provided Support Service Provider (SSP), Communication Facilitator (CF), and Case Management services under a State of New Mexico contract for the fiscal year that began on July 1, 2024, and ended on June 30, 2025. The program served a total of 99 participants and maintained a network of 28 to 29 active SSPs. Vancro also fulfilled 2,758 SSP requests, providing 7,413 total service hours.

Key Metrics (Year to Date) Performance Indicator	Total (FY 2024–2025)
Total Program Participants	99
Active Support Service Providers	28–29
SSP Requests Fulfilled	2758
Total SSP Service Hours Provided	7413
Communication Facilitator Requests Fulfilled	426
Communication Facilitator Service Hours	618.75
Number of Complaints Addressed	13
Average Quarterly Fill Rate	98%+

Program Growth and Service Delivery

Vancro started the fiscal year serving over 90 participants and ended with 99 active participants, including DeafBlind individuals, Deaf with Additional Disabilities, and Deaf Senior Citizens across New Mexico. The program was supported by 28-29 active SSPs and an additional cohort in onboarding to handle the high demand for services.

In October, Vancro launched the Communication Facilitator (CF) program that was added to the contract by the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing after the Commission had been approved for the funding by the legislature. The program is designed to assist DeafBlind and Deaf with Addition Disabilities individuals with ASL-based video calls. The program quickly became an essential part of the service model, with 14 CFs hired and trained by the end of the year.

Support Service Provider Program

The SSP Program remained the backbone of our work, enabling DeafBlind, Deaf Seniors and Deaf with Additional Disabilities New Mexicans to navigate life with increased independence, dignity, and choice. From routine errands to medical appointments and social activities, SSPs provided vital visual and environmental information, sighted guide assistance, and access coordination.

Case Management and Consumer Engagement

Vancro's case management team provided support for various issues, including housing instability, technology troubleshooting, and tax filing assistance. When the original tax vendor was unavailable, Vancro arranged appointments with an alternative provider over two days to ensure participants received timely help.

The team also collaborated with public and private partners, such as the NMCDHH, Adult Protective Services, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf. Participants shared feedback through surveys and direct contact, expressing appreciation for the SSPs but also raising concerns about service hours.

Communication Facilitator (CF) Program

A key accomplishment in FY25 was the launch of the CF program, which began in the second quarter and grew quickly to meet demand. The program provides neutral, real-time support for individuals using ASL for video calls. A confidential office space for calls was set up at Bilingual Multicultural Services, Inc.

Participant feedback on the CF program was very positive, with testimonials highlighting that the program made communication easier and helped them feel heard and understood.

Community Engagement, Training and Partnerships

Throughout the year, Vancro staff actively cultivated relationships across the Deaf, DeafBlind, interpreting, and disability communities. Notable outreach events and collaborations included:

- Presentations at the New Mexico School for the Deaf on DeafBlindness in education
- Meetings with the DeafBlind Task Force, including subcommittee sessions
- Hosting and attending Disability Awareness events.
- Participation in Deaf community events.
- Coordination with Bernalillo County to offer ASL interpreters and SSPs on two designated voting days, ensuring civic access for all participants in collaboration with NMCDHH.

Challenges and Future Direction

The fiscal year presented some challenges. Complaints were addressed promptly through mediation and supervision. In response to feedback and other challenges, Vancro has outlined several goals for the future:

- Recruitment and Retention: Expand efforts to recruit and retain SSPs and CFs outside of Albuquerque.
- Increase hours of service: With additional SSP's and funding increase the SSP service hours.
- Program Transparency: Increase transparency and consistency in the allocation of service hours.

- Outreach: Continue to conduct outreach and educational initiatives about the SSP program.
- Communication: Improve communication with SSPs and participants regarding the service request process.
- Consumer Feedback: Continue to analyze consumer feedback to make program improvements.
- National Awareness: Raise national awareness for the Communication Facilitator program.

Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program

Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) is a service that the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides to the community throughout the state. The program consists of amplified phones, visual communication devices such as the CapTel (captioned telephone) and iPads, along with a variety of accessories such as notification systems, smoke alert systems, phone ringers, and personal assistive devices. The Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices each have a testing/demo room where equipment is available for testing to community members who are curious about which devices might work best for their needs.

Over the past year, Mr. Sean Sinderholm made significant progress in his role with the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP), thanks to the support of Ms. Gutiérrez. In the first quarter, he deepened his understanding of TEDP operations, first with Mr. Gomme, and then Ms. Gutiérrez. This allowed Mr. Sinderholm to have a better grasp of the nuance and differences throughout different state programs, when he attended the national TEDPA conference. There, he gained insight into emerging assistive technologies and learned from Mr. Gomme and other state leaders, as well as the various vendors at the conference. This helped shape his understanding of the Commission's goals of improving service quality for New Mexicans. In addition, Mr. Sinderholm also attended the NASRA (National Association for State Relay Administrators) National Conference, at the request of Mr. Gomme.

Mr. Sinderholm also directly supported individuals with hearing loss thanks to the connections from Mr. Gomme, Mr. Brennan, and Ms. Bregar, including connecting one person to valuable resources like the Hearing Loss Association of America and the NMCDHH website for hearing aid support and information.

In the second quarter, Mr. Sinderholm was involved in the plans led by the Executive Director to enhance the TEDP's equipment offerings by adding new accessible devices, such as the Amplicomm PowerTel 3355 and Google Pixel products. He and Mr. Gomme continued addressing challenges related to the state's transition from analog to digital phone infrastructure, collaborating with Relay New Mexico on educational materials to support this shift.

During the third quarter, outreach efforts continued to promote TEDP and NMCDHH services. Discussions began regarding Mr. Sinderholm's transition into program leadership, and he, along with Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Gomme, worked to update the equipment catalog and enhance device offerings.

In the fourth quarter, Mr. Sinderholm and Mr. Gomme conducted an on-site inspection of Teltex Inc., the program's equipment vendor. This visit assisted Mr. Sinderholm's understanding of how Teltex satisfies state standards and helped establish a strong point of contact for future collaboration. Discussions with the vendor also explored potential new products to further improve accessibility for qualified New Mexicans.

For the year, TEDP distributed a total of 1,279 pieces of equipment, exceeding our legislative measure.

Community Engagement

Amy Bourque, Director of Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Department provides a broad range of services to improve communication access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Speech Disabled residents of New Mexico. During fiscal year 2025, the department worked on a variety of projects and activities while continuing to supervise all direct contract signed language interpreters, apprentice interpreters, and other contractors. Full time staff members are:

- Amy Bourque, Director of Community Engagement
- Jessica Eubank, Communication Development Specialist
- Trevor Brennan, Community Engagement Specialist

The range of services provided by the Community Engagement Department include:

Professional Development Opportunities for Signed Language Interpreters

- New Mexico Mentoring
 - A structured, 16-week mentoring program for licensed New Mexico signed language interpreters.
- Apprentice Interpreter Program
 - In-house professional development program for licensed interpreters and interpreters who are candidates for certification.
- Professional Development Contracts
 - Statewide professional development opportunities via contracts with other individuals and entities for both interpreters and other service providers.
- Professional Development Collaboration
 - Collaboration with other New Mexico entities to provide coordinated interpreter professional development opportunities

Information Regarding Communication Access

- Signed Language Interpreter Licensure
 - Serve as liaison from NMCDHH to the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board
- Interpreter Referral Information
 - Provide information to the community regarding accessing the service of signed language interpreters
- Captioning Referral Information
 - Provide information to the community regarding accessing real-time captioning services
- Fact Sheets on a broad range of communication access topics

- Available for free download from our website. Existing fact sheets are regularly updated, and new ones are added as needed.
- Information and Referral
 - Respond to questions from the community providing resources for assistance.

Social Media and Website

- Share information with our constituents through our online presence including:
 - Website: www.cdhh.nm.gov
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/NMCDHH
 - Twitter: www.twitter.com/NMCDHH
 - Instagram: www.instagram.com/NMCDHH
 - YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/NMCDHH
 - LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/new-mexico-commission-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing-96710628
 - Bi-weekly email newsletter using the MailChimp platform.

Communication Access

- Provide communication access services for NMCDHH staff at meetings, presentations, outreach events, and when providing client services in our offices or at off-site locations, both in-person and remotely.

Special Projects

- Coordinates a variety of special projects to increase our constituents' access to legal, behavioral health, and other services.

NMCDHH Library

- Resources available for loan statewide with the collection included in an online database: <https://NMCDHH.librarika.com>

Information Technology

- The Community Engagement Specialist is the point of contact for Information Technology issues and is the liaison between NMCDHH and the state Department of Information Technology (DoIT).

Community Engagement Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2025

- After 17 years of service, Ms. Lisa Dignan retired from NMCDHH. Interim director Mr. Trevor Brennan led the Community Engagement Department until Ms. Amy Bourque was selected as the new Director of Community Engagement. Ms.

Dignan's Human Resources duties were taken on by Ms. Renee Bregar. The first two quarters of FY25 were largely ensuring that there would be a successful transition of the department, from Ms. Dignan to the next permanent Director. Mr. Brennan ensured, along with Ms. Eubank, that NMCDHH interpreting needs were met, and that Ms. Eubank was supported in all functions of her role. Mr. Brennan is also indebted to Ms. Eubank, for her support with all matters related to interpreting for both NMCDHH staff, and the community as needed.

- After Ms. Dignan departed, they also examined the departmental data and training from top to bottom, to look for suggestions for improvement for the next Director. Mr. Brennan and Ms. Eubank also began to make interpreting preparations for the next legislative session. These actions also occurred as Mr. Brennan and Ms. Eubank continued their normal job functions, highlights of which are described later in this report.
- Mx. Bourque joined the commission in January 2025 after exactly ten years away. They were in the original cohort of the Apprentice Interpreter Program then went on to be a community, educational, and VRS interpreter. With the first-hand knowledge of what interpreters face locally, they return to make a positive impact on the needs of New Mexican signed language interpreters.
- Mr. Brennan was the lead staff member for running the fall cohort of New Mexico Mentoring (NMM), which saw 4 participants, in two pairings. This gave Mr. Brennan, along with Ms. Eubank, insight into the New Mexico Mentoring process that they were able to share with Mx. Bourque. Feedback from the cohort, and Mr. Brennan's experience showed a need to revisit the materials and process of a mentoring session. When New Mexico Mentoring began, it was one of the only programs in the state in which interpreters could participate and improve their skills. With the rise of other programs, and virtual opportunities, this is no longer the case; the Commission is investigating the best path forward in FY26. Mx. Bourque has reviewed participant feedback from 2020-2024 to see what has been successful in the NMM program and what needs to be changed. This will help us know how the program curriculum needs to be updated before calling for curricula creators.
- Mx. Bourque and Ms. Eubank worked together to submit an application to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) to become a Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) sponsor. RID certified interpreters must meet a minimum of approved Continuing Education Units (CEUs) during their certification cycles. CEU approval depends on a CMP sponsor. By becoming a sponsor, we will not have to rely on outside entities to approve CEUs for our professional development at a cost.

- Mx. Bourque and Ms. Eubank used much of Q3 and Q4 to modify and refine the Apprentice Interpreter Program. They have created a new mission statement, a comprehensive plan for the year, and selected three new apprentices for FY26.
 - “The mission of the NMCDHH Apprentice Interpreter Program is to enhance novice signed language interpreters’ skills and abilities to provide quality, effective communication access to the residents of New Mexico through structured professional development plans, mentored interpreting practice, and exploration of ethical dilemmas.”
 - At the end of FY25, the new Apprentice Interpreter cohort was chosen. After submitting applications that included letters of interest, a current resume, a sample video of their signing skill, and letters of recommendation, they were then interviewed by several NMCDHH staff from the Community Engagement, Community Advocacy, and Technology departments. Three novice interpreters will begin their year with us in FY26.
- The Apprentice Interpreter cohort of FY25 participated in 155 hours of professional development and provided over 100 hours of interpreting services with our staff interpreter as their mentor and support. These are formative experiences for novice interpreters to be able to develop their skills in a safe and supportive environment before going on to have successful careers interpreting in NM.
- In FY25, we provided over 500 hours of interpreting services for our staff’s communication access. This does not include the time spent on coordination and preparation that goes into a successful interpreting assignment. With the volume of assignments, it remains critical for us to work with outside interpreters. Our direct contracts continue to be a more financially responsible approach than solely relying on interpreting agencies.
- We also helped coordinate and provide interpreters to events by other organizations and state agencies who were unable to provide adequate accommodation for various reasons. We are dedicated to showing others what accessibility looks like in action and were proud to have stepped up for the State.
- In early May, the department hosted a professional development workshop for New Mexican interpreters and others. This workshop was titled “The Reality of Suicide: What Interpreters Need to Know.” It was a 6-hour training on understanding suicide by delving into risk factors and protective factors, statistics, what it means for survivors, and how to discuss and interpret this topic when it shows up in medical, legal and video relay settings. The presenters modeled how to speak about it in English and how to sign concepts in ASL. We had 64 participants, 18 of whom are licensed NM interpreters. In our post-event

survey, we received immensely positive feedback from attendees. A few highlights:

- “I always greatly appreciate professional development for interpreters that takes a humanist perspective, rather than a bureaucratic one. The presenters were well-prepared, knowledgeable, clear, and compassionate. This was a great workshop.”
- “I was concerned this workshop would be difficult for me. It has changed my perspective. Thank you!”
- “So much important information and the best web workshop in awhile thank you”
- “This was incredibly valuable information. I am so grateful for this workshop to have been available. Especially for free.”
- The social media reach grew further in FY25. At the end of Quarter 4, NMCDHH had:
 - 1,929 followers on Facebook
 - 413 followers on Twitter
 - 269 followers on Instagram
 - 112 subscribers on YouTube
 - 224 connections on LinkedIn
 - 357 subscribers to the MailChimp email newsletter
- Since Mr. Brennan became the primary person coordinating social media for the agency in FY21, there has been a 20% increase in social media followers for the Commission.
- In the coming Fiscal Year, Mr. Gomme, Mx. Bourque, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Sinderholm, and other staff are continuing to work together to develop new ways to share with our community about NMCDHH services, such a book of the week, and technology item of the month posts.
- Mr. Brennan and Mx. Bourque worked to develop a guiding principle of our social media presence: “To share information relevant to the health, safety, community, and wellbeing of New Mexico Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Disabled residents.” When asked by others to share information, we will be asking ourselves if the posting serves our mission.
- The NMCDHH library currently has 122 registered patrons, a growth of six for FY25, and eight items were rented by patrons during the Fiscal Year.
- The department has added 22 new titles to our library’s collection. These run the gamut from interpreter education, Deaf culture, DeafBlind topics, interpreting in legal settings, and even children’s books. These additions will be valuable to our constituents who are looking to achieve interpreter certification, learn about Deaf culture for their family members, and more. We will begin promoting these books to our community in FY26.

- Ms. Eubank continued to update our fact sheets as new information became available. This included BEI Testing Process, Sharing Your Credly Digital Credentials, Step by Step Guide for BEI Testing Registration, and Step by Step Guide for CASLI Testing Registration.
- The department has taken on several roles in the planning and execution of the Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) event, to be held in October 2025. This is a collaboration of many state agencies and community partners to bring awareness to and resources for individuals with disabilities and the employers who hire them. Since this is such a large event, it requires careful planning of resources and people. We will be providing some interpreters and Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) for the event. Mx. Bourque is on the volunteer committee where they are responsible for the schedule and flow of volunteers on the day of the event, Mr. Brennan is also involved in the AV and technology planning for DEAM, and Ms. Eubank will be coordinating the interpreters for the event.

Director of Community Engagement Highlights

- Mx. Bourque began to take training immediately in the essentials of management, the role of an ADA coordinator, budget bootcamp, and state purchasing.
- As an interpreter for Mr. Gomme, Mx. Bourque spent much of Q3 in Santa Fe for the Legislative Session. They met lawmakers and individuals from other organizations while learning the legislative process for state agencies.
- Mx. Bourque was invited to join the Digital Accessibility Collaborative alongside Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme. This inter-agency group is dedicated to creating and ensuring digital accessibility for all New Mexicans. With a deadline of April 2026, this collective is working toward Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for State websites and documents.

Community Engagement Specialist, Trevor Brennan, Highlights

- Mr. Brennan continues to serve as the DoIT Point of Contact for the agency and has been involved in their initiatives and efforts in FY25. Mr. Brennan coordinated with DoIT to ensure the smooth IT onboarding and exit of staff members, attended meetings on the implementation and guidance of Artificial Intelligence by the state, and helped to draft an Acceptable Use Policy for IT along with Mr. Gomme.
- In an intersection of his WCAG, IT, and AI work, Mr. Brennan attended the National M-Enabling Summit in the second quarter. The Summit hosted networking and educational opportunities with a focus on leaders and practitioners engaging in accessible technologies and environments from around the globe. This year's conference had a heavy focus on accessibility, AI, and

accessibility technology. Mr. Brennan attended workshops and training on topics such as “AI in Wearable Technology”, “AI Ethics in Persons with Disabilities”, “WCAG Requirements for State and Local Agencies”, and “Accessibility and Inclusion in Media”, and met and networked with individuals from the Federal Communications Commission, other disability organizations, and a variety of vendors of various accessibility equipment. The conference was a valuable learning experience for Mr. Brennan, and what he learned was shared with Commission staff to benefit other Commission programs, such as the TEDP, and his own work on ensuring NMCDHH meets Web Content and Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.1 AA requirements.

- Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme met with Real Time Solutions (RTS), our website vendor, to plan and implement the remediation of the CDHH website. RTS was able to remediate the website without issue, and it is now accessible, meeting WCAG 2.1 standards with only some contrast of items to be addressed. An accessibility statement has been added to the website. With the completion of the website, we are near the tail end of phase 2 of 3 of meeting the new Title II accessibility requirements with a deadline of April 2026.
- Mr. Brennan is working with partner organizations to teach them how to make accessible images and documents that can be shared via NMCDHH channels, after WCAG laws have come into effect.

Communication Development Specialist, Jessica Eubank, Highlights

- Ms. Eubank provided two trainings on how to work with clients with Hearing Loss and how to request sign language interpreting services for Aging and Long-Term Services. These trainings included information on appropriate terminology, explanation of the different cultural and linguistic identities of the Hearing Loss Community in New Mexico, the differences between Support Service Providers and interpreters, the impacts of language deprivation and language dysfluency on communication access, and considerations for DeafBlind individuals.
- With respect to improving the number of interpreters in the state. Ms. Eubank and Commission staff saw a value in participating in interviews hosted by the Collegiate Commission on Interpreter Education (CCIE) regarding the quality of interpreter education at the University of New Mexico Signed Language Interpretation Program. These interviews asked for the perspectives of alumni, practicum supervisors, and community stakeholders regarding how the UNM program meets the communication access needs in New Mexico. As an accredited program UNM shows a commitment towards national standards and guidelines which also shows prospective students that UNM is a program that is committed to graduating interpreters with the highest level of qualifications and standards.

*FY25
Apprentices*



MOLLY ARSENEAU



ISABELLA KROOTH



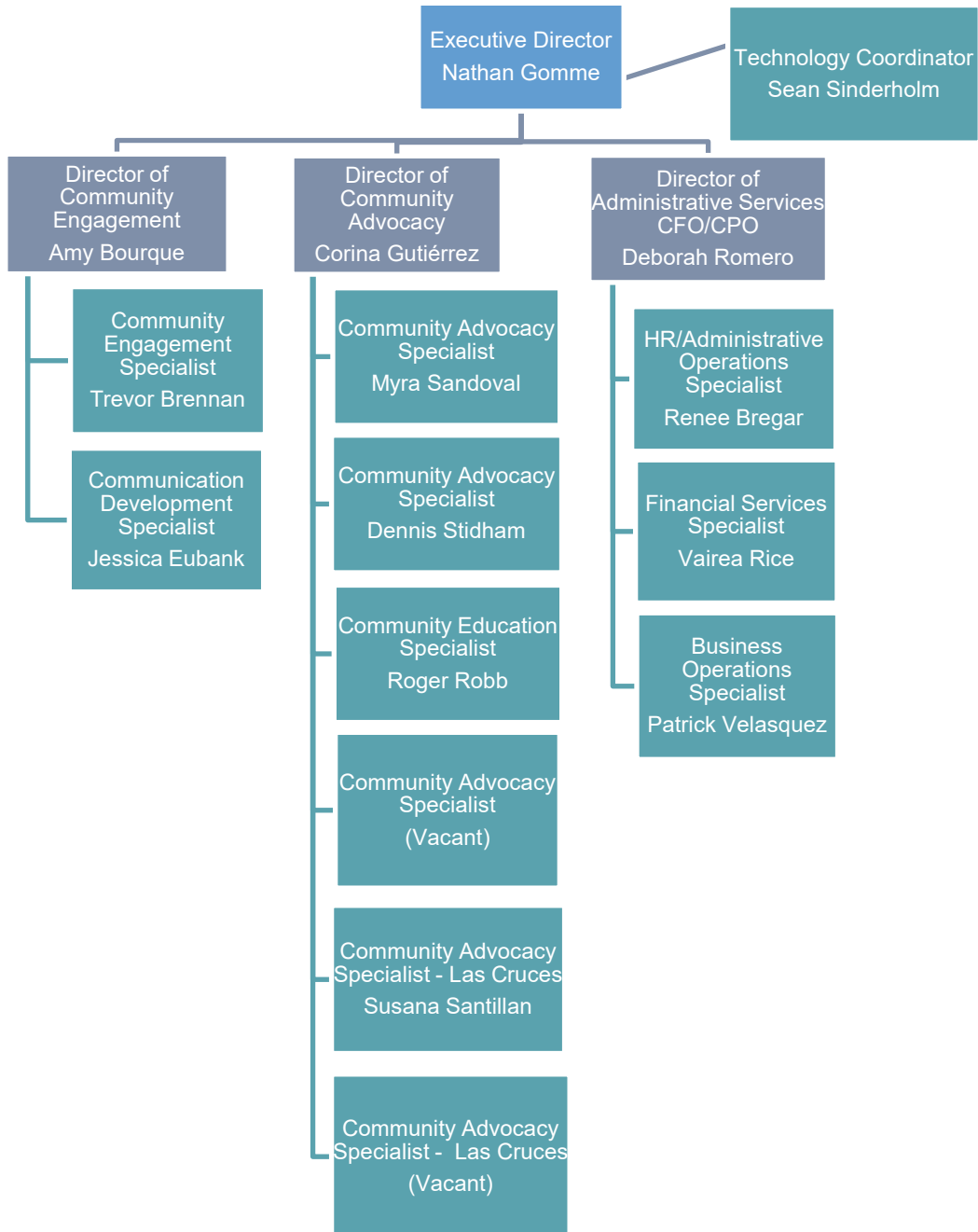
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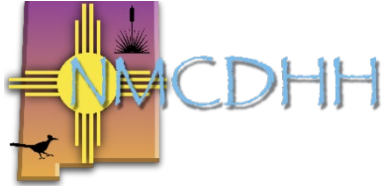


RALYNN SKEETS

NMCDHH Organizational Chart

as of June 30, 2025





Staff Members

G. Nathan Gomme, Executive Director

G. Nathan Gomme began his career with NMCDHH as a Service Coordinator in November 2008, and later became the Director of the Public Policy and Advocacy Department. In April of FY14, he was selected to be Executive Director after an extensive nationwide search. Originally from Connecticut, Mr. Gomme holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Gallaudet University where he graduated with University Honors. A resident of New Mexico since 2005, Mr. Gomme has a wealth of experience in transition issues, advocacy, and ADA compliance, and has proven his leadership skills both within the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and in the community through several projects with partner agencies.



Amy Bourque, Director of Community Engagement

A profile picture of Nathan Amy Bourque is a New Mexico native, born and raised in Albuquerque. They graduated from UNM with a degree in Signed Language Interpreting and Theatre in 2013. After graduation, Amy was among the first apprentices here at NMCDHH, later passing the RID NIC in 2017. Amy has worked in community interpreting for over ten years and educational K-12 for three years. As a lifelong learner, they have hundreds of hours of professional development from many groups such as Project CLIMB (Cultivating Legal Interpreters from Minority Backgrounds) and MHIT (Mental Health Interpreter Training). With that passion, Amy works to bring high quality professional development to the interpreters of New Mexico.



Lisa Dignan, Former Director of Community Engagement (Retired)



Lisa Dignan directed the Community Engagement Department. Lisa is a California native who has lived in seven different states and relocated to Albuquerque in 2007 after serving as the disability services coordinator at Laramie County Community College in Wyoming for 13 years. A nationally certified interpreter with over 35 years of experience and a lengthy history in the independent living movement, Lisa earned a master's degree in adult education from the University of Wyoming and holds RID certifications in interpretation and transliteration. Lisa retired in the Second Quarter.

Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy

A profile picture of Corina Gutiérrez is a New Mexico native from Hatch, the “Chile Capital of the World.” Corina attended the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) for most of her education. She is a renowned basketball player who was part of the Deaflympics women’s basketball team and is one of three inductees to the Wall of Fame at NMSD. She received a bachelor’s degree in physical education from Gallaudet University.



Corina previously worked at NMSD, her alma mater, as a Student Life Educator, and worked at the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind as a Master Teaching Parent. She has served as the American Sign Language Coordinator and teacher at the Deaf Culture Center and has served on the New Mexico Association for the Deaf Board of Directors, as an advisory board member for Gallaudet University Regional Center – Southwest, as a board member for National Council of Hispano Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Council de Manos, and Raíces del Rio Grande.

Corina is currently serving as a board member for the NMSD Alumni Association and the New Mexico Mano a Mano. Corina joined NMCDHH in August of 2007. She plans, advocates and coordinates services to meet her clients’ needs. In FY14, Corina became Interim Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, and in FY15, became Director of Public Policy & Advocacy. The Public Policy & Advocacy Department is now the Community Advocacy Department, and Corina remains Director of that department.

Deborah Romero, Director of Administration Services, CFO & CPO



Deborah Romero is a New Mexico native from Santa Fe. She is currently the Chief Financial Officer. She has over 24 years in government service. Prior to her career in government, Deborah was the director of a private school. She is a member of NMPPA, New Mexico Public Procurement Association. She attended New Mexico State Cooperative Extension, NM-EDGE and is a Certified Public Purchasing Professional PPP and Certified Public Officer, CPO. Deborah also attended the University of New Mexico and is a Certified Emergency Medical Technician and former volunteer

firefighter.

Renee Bregar, Administrative Operations Specialist

Renée is agency Human Resources (HR). She is responsible for all HR functions including: recruiting, compensation and classification, employee resources, personnel issues, training management, payroll, and document control.



Renee is also the agency Administrative Operations Specialist and is responsible for administrative support for the Albuquerque and Las Cruces NMCDHH offices.

Renée brings over 30 years' experience in customer service within multiple industries in Ohio, Indiana, and Texas. Her education initially focused on mental health technology, then ASL.

Renée and her wife, who is Deaf, have been married for more than 25 years. Renée is passionate about service to others. She is honored and excited to be able to serve the Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf with Additional Disabilities, Hard of Hearing and Speech Disabled communities in New Mexico, as well as the amazing NMCDHH team.

Trevor Brennan, Community Engagement Specialist



Trevor Brennan is a New Mexico native from Edgewood who became Hard-of-Hearing at age 10. He is a graduate of the New Mexico School for the Deaf. He has an associate's degree in integrated studies from Central New Mexico Community College, and also has certifications in general business and payroll clerk. He has served as the Treasurer for the NM Association for the Deaf in the past and is passionate about helping others.

Trevor has over 15 years of customer service experience from a variety of industries at the local, county, and state level. Trevor first worked for the Commission as a Mentor for New Mexico Mentoring starting in 2020 and joined the full-time staff in 2021 as the Administrative Operations Specialist, before being transferred to Community Engagement Specialist in 2023.

Jennifer Dahlgren, Community Advocacy Specialist

Jennifer has worked in the field of communication access, education, interpreting and advocacy for more than 15 years with a passion for the empowerment that comes through communication. They have trained countless service providers and students in the medical, legal, educational, social services and business fields. They have presented both nationally and internationally to audiences large and small, and actively engages in advocating for the communication access rights for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and Deaf with Additional Disabilities so that they can function independently and equitably in society. Additionally, Jennifer advocates for the intersectional needs of the LGBTQ+ and Deaf communities.



Jennifer believes education is the key to access and equality. By educating service providers, students and leaders about the rights and needs of marginalized communities, we make the world a more equitable place. Jennifer is Deaf-Queer native American Sign Language user who utilizes interpreters in their everyday life. Jennifer firmly believes that when you know better you do better. So, they do their part to spread a little more knowledge about the Deaf culture so that the world is a more equitable place for all Deaf people whatever their intersecting identities may be. Jennifer left the agency in the Fourth Quarter.

Jessica Eubank, Communication Development Specialist



Jessica Eubank is a native of Belen, New Mexico. Jessica holds degrees from the University of New Mexico in Signed Language Interpretation and Psychology. She also holds her National Interpreter Certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, as well as her Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment qualification in K-12 education. She has specialized training in performing arts interpreting and interpreting for religious settings.

A former NMCDHH apprentice herself, Jessica is excited to now supervise the NMCDHH Apprentice Interpreter Program and is dedicated to fostering professional growth and opportunity for our local community. Jessica both provides and coordinates interpreting services for NMCDHH staff and agency needs.

Vairea Rice, Financial Services Specialist

Vairea Rice was born and raised in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She has been Hard of Hearing since she was 3 years old and has thrived in mainstream public schools with the help of talented and proactive educators, speech therapists, audiologists, and hearing-assistive technology such as hearing aids, FM systems, and relay services. Her grandmother, Daisy N. Rice, was one of the delegates who conceived and wrote the first drafts of the ADA articles in 1990 and, in 1991, helped establish the NMCDHH.



Vairea received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Accounting and a Master of Science in Accounting from Western Governor’s University in Utah. Vairea strongly believes in unity between Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and hearing communities by allowing for many forms of access to education, language, and communication for all individuals. Vairea started with the Commission as the Business Operations Specialist in October 2023 and was promoted to Financial Services Specialist in May 2024.

Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist



Roger is an Albuquerque native who is very happy to be living in Albuquerque once again after living in California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. To quote Dorothy from “The Wizard of Oz”, “There’s no place like home!” With a 15-year history in Advocacy and Case Management at Deaf and Hard of Hearing agencies in the aforementioned states, Roger brings a wealth of experience to the NMCDHH. Roger

graduated from the New Mexico School for the Deaf and majored in Sociology at Point Loma Nazarene College in San Diego

Myra Sandoval, Community Advocacy Specialist

Myra Sandoval was born in Albuquerque and grew up in Los Lunas. She is the third generation of a Deaf family and was also the third generation to graduate from the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD). She received her Associate degree in Laboratory Science at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), then completed her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Phoenix. Ms. Sandoval has had experience working in the mental health field as Behavior Health Technician and has experience working with DeafBlind, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing communities as a Service Coordinator.



Susana Santillan, Community Advocacy Specialist



Susana Santillan is a Community Advocacy Specialist in our Las Cruces office. Susana has a long history serving individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. Before coming to NMCDHH, she was the Deafness Resource Specialist for Volar Center for Independent Living, the Deafness Resources Specialist for Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) and served in the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Disabled Student Services Office. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Service presented the Community

Member "Diamond Amigo Award" to Susana in October 2015. Susana is trilingual in English, Spanish, and ASL. She is the proud mother of four children, one of whom is a DeafBlind adult with Usher Syndrome. Due to her daughter's deafness, Susana has been involved in the Deaf community for 32 years.

Sean Sinderholm, Technology Coordinator

Sean Sinderholm is the Technology Coordinator for NMCDHH, and his responsibilities include coordinating the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP). Throughout his career, Sean has had formative and professional experiences in Deaf-centric services for Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing and Hearing. He has worked as a Deaf Interpreter, Supportive Services Provider, Co-Navigator, Advocate, and Administrative Assistant. Recently, he moved to Albuquerque from his childhood home, Southern California, and is looking forward to making his mark in New Mexico.





Dennis Stidham, Community Advocacy Specialist

Dennis Stidham is a Community Advocacy Specialist in NMCDHH's Albuquerque office. Dennis has 14 years of experience working with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing throughout the Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Belen, and Santa Fe areas. Dennis is originally from Arizona but has been a resident of New Mexico since 2003. Dennis is married and they have four children. His wife, Suella, is also Deaf.

Patrick Velasquez, Business Operations Specialist

Patrick Velasquez is a native New Mexican from the beautiful Espanola Valley. He graduated from Espanola Valley High School and pursues higher education from the University of New Mexico, studying pre-law, business, and multilingual recognition in ASL. Relatively new to the Deaf community, Patrick enjoys immersing himself in the beauty of ASL, learning many new signs along the way- and, of course, making mistakes.



Before his role at NMCDHH, Patrick worked for various businesses around northern New Mexico, and served as a Teen Court Judge for Espanola Municipal Courts, presiding over juvenile cases across northern New Mexico in collaboration with the Children, Youth, & Families Department. His focus on rehabilitation over punishment led him to advocate for juvenile support groups committed to uplifting northern adolescents. Patrick is now excited to support NMCDHH's mission to provide leadership, education, advocacy, and programs to eliminate obstacles to the social, economic, educational, cultural, and intellectual well-being of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals in New Mexico- Learning more and more about the Deaf community and culture along the way.

Board of Commissioners

Mr. John Hooper – Chair, Deaf or Hard of Hearing Representative of Northern NM

John Hooper is a native New Mexican, born in Lovington. He attended and graduated from the New Mexico School for the Deaf. He received his associate's degree from the New Mexico Junior College in Hobbs and bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico. Mr. Hooper retired from the State of New Mexico in 2014 after working 25 years and 7 of those years he was employed with the NM Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Mr. Hooper is active in the community; he officiates middle and high school basketball and is the current President of the Hearing Loss Association of America Santa Fe Chapter. In the past, Mr. Hooper has been active on the New Mexico Relay Board and Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees).



Dr. Norm Dawson – Deaf/Hard of Hearing Professional



Dr. Norm Dawson, a resident of New Mexico for over 61 years, became deaf at age 27. He learned sign language and graduated from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor of University Studies (BUS). He then earned a Bachelor of Science (BS) and a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Parker College of Chiropractic in Dallas, TX.

Throughout his life, Dr. Dawson has been a strong advocate for himself and others with hearing loss. His advocacy journey began at age 14 when he insisted that his father provide him with hearing aids. While attending UNM, he secured funding for the first TTY (Teletypewriter) in the library. With the assistance of the Department of Justice, he successfully lobbied for UNM to provide sign language interpreters for extracurricular activities, additional braille resources, and more wheelchair ramps. He also played a key role in the creation of the New Mexico Relay.

Currently, Dr. Dawson delivers educational seminars on reducing the risk of dementia associated with hearing loss and other lifestyle modifications, including nutrition and exercise. He is also a vocal advocate for organizations to provide closed captioning, both online and in person. Dr. Dawson has been self-employed for most of his life.

He is actively involved with the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)-Albuquerque chapter and serves on the New Mexico Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology, and

Hearing Aid Dispensers Board. Additionally, he currently serves as the President of the Albuquerque Challenge Toastmasters Club.

Dr. Dawson has been married for 44 years, and together with his spouse, they have five children, two of whom have hearing loss. They enjoy bike riding, traveling, and being involved in the community.

Tiffany Gallegos – Parent of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

Tiffany Gallegos was born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She now resides in Las Vegas, New Mexico, with her husband, Jimmie, and their four beautiful children. As a family, they are dedicated to fostering an environment that prioritizes communication and language development, particularly for their eldest child who has hearing loss.



Tiffany studied Fire Science and Emergency Medical Services at the University of New Mexico, and she spent a decade working in emergency medicine across northern New Mexico. These experiences ignited her passion for advocating for others, particularly in improving their access to essential services and resources, and empowering them to improve their quality of life.

Currently, Tiffany is a stay-at-home mom, managing her children’s medical needs and continuing her advocacy work. She also enjoys expanding her knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL) and regularly takes classes to improve her communication skills with her daughter, as well as to connect more deeply with the Deaf community.

In her leisure time, Tiffany enjoys sewing, reading, farming, and raising chickens with her family. Her life is driven by a deep commitment to her family’s well-being and the belief in making a positive impact in her community.

Dr. Jennifer Herbold – Superintendent of the New Mexico School for the Deaf



Jennifer Herbold was born in Silver Spring, Maryland, a stone’s throw from Washington DC where she was practically raised on the Gallaudet University campus. She received her B.A. degrees in English and Secondary Education in 1997, and her Master’s in Deaf Education in 1999 from Gallaudet. Her first job in college was with the campus summer intern and conference housing program. As part of her job, she became familiar with the inner workings of the U.S. Capitol and politics. In 1995, she started working directly for the Secretary-General then President of the Deaflympics in various positions. During her six years with the Deaflympics, she acquired a wealth of

experience in collaboration and organization, as well as love for working with people from international cultures.

Dr. Herbold was thrilled to move to New Mexico in 1999 where she reconnected to her family's southwestern roots and started her first full time career teaching English at the New Mexico School for the Deaf. During this time, she also attended the University of Arizona as a fourth-generation graduate where she earned her PhD in Language, Reading and Culture in 2008. She eventually became a literacy specialist, assistant principal, principal, and Director of Instruction. She currently is honored to be the school's Superintendent. When she isn't working, she enjoys reading, crocheting, working on various projects, traveling, and spending time with her husband, three children and the family Aussie.

Joseph Lopez III – Deaf or Heard of Hearing Representative of Southern New Mexico

Joseph Lopez III, aka "JoJo," was born and raised in Riverside, California, and attended the California School for the Deaf Riverside (2004) and Gallaudet University (2010/2017). He has a B.A. in Communication Studies and an M.A in Sign Language Education. JoJo currently lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and works as a Developmental Specialist for the Early Intervention Department at New Mexico School for the Deaf. He is also an Adjunct Instructor for ASL Levels I & II at New Mexico State University. JoJo also works for the Family Language Connector



Program for the Heritage Sign Language Center at Gallaudet University. He is an active advocate in his community and is involved in local, state, and national organizations. Previously, JoJo served as a Member At Large for the New Mexico Association for the Deaf. Currently, he serves on the boards for Raíces del Rio Grande, New Mexico Mano A Mano, Council de Manos, and the National Association of the Deaf. He loves socializing, hiking, drinking coffee, taking pictures, and spending quality time with family.

Ms. Casey Stone-Romero – Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Casey Stone-Romero has been appointed by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to serve as the director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), effective January 10, 2022. With this appointment, Ms. Stone-Romero returns to the agency for which she worked from 1997 to 2014.

Stone-Romero's experience with NMDVR began as a receptionist and secretary. She quickly earned promotions to training specialist, vocational rehabilitation technician, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and finally, staff development specialist.

Stone-Romero has worked for several other state agencies in addition to NMDVR, serving as community inclusion manager and statewide supported employment lead for the New Mexico Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, human resources analyst in the state's General Services Department, and training and development specialist in the State Personnel Office.

A life-long northern New Mexico resident, Ms. Stone-Romero and her husband Jason reside in Santa Fe with their son Tiger. Ms. Stone-Romero retired in March 2025.

Dr. Meena Mann – President of New Mexico Association for the Deaf (Former)

Dr. Meena Mann was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia. Throughout childhood, she attended Vancouver Oral Center, Jericho Hill School for the Deaf, and Kitsilano Secondary School. She has a BA in Psychology and Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision both from Gallaudet University, as well as an MS in Deaf Education from McDaniel College. In 2016, she received her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership with track specialization in Organizational Leadership.



Her passion is to share her expertise and knowledge in organizational leadership. She enjoys providing consultations to non-profit organizations. Meena is actively involved in local, state, and national organizations. She is currently the president of the New Mexico Association of the Deaf. In the past, she served as an Appointed Board Member of the National Association for the Deaf; Advisory Committee for Kentucky Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID); Organizational Advisor for Louisville Association for the Deaf; and ASL Advisory Committee for Nashville Community College.

Dr. Mann works as a Statewide Educational Consultant in the Outreach Department at New Mexico School for the Deaf. During her leisure time, she enjoys biking, hiking, and traveling. She resides in Santa Fe, NM with her husband, Bryce McMillan. Dr. Mann completed her term as NMAD president in FY25.

Mr. Ryan Means – President of New Mexico Association for the Deaf

Ryan Means is a native of White Rock, NM. He attended the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) and mainstream schools. Ryan received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, emphasis in Pre-Law, with a minor in History. In efforts to deepen his expertise,



Ryan pursued a Master of Public Affairs, Concentration in Political and Government Process, all from NM Highlands University (NMHU) in Las Vegas, NM.

Ryan began a career with the federal government in the National Parks service where he discovered a profound passion for serving his country by conserving and caring for its public lands and the joy of being outdoors. Ryan balanced seasonal work with the federal government during the summer with work at the New Mexico

Legislative Sessions during the winter while enrolled into the graduate program. Ryan operated as the Director of the Forest Service's Hudson-Meng Education and Research Center in Nebraska for six years before moving back to Santa Fe. For more than sixteen years, Ryan has been a dedicated public servant with the federal government. He currently serves as a Recreation Management Specialist with the Forest Service's Southwestern Regional Office. Ryan's experience has provided him an understanding of and exposure to the intricacies of government and law.

Beyond his professional roles, he is deeply involved in his community and serves on several boards and is the current President of the New Mexico Association for the Deaf (NMAD). He is dedicated to bringing the Deaf & Hard of Hearing community together and working on initiatives to create more opportunities and leveraging them to promote their concerns and needs.

In addition to his other commitments, Ryan enjoys fishing and camping with his family, traveling around the world with his beautiful wife, and playing rugby.

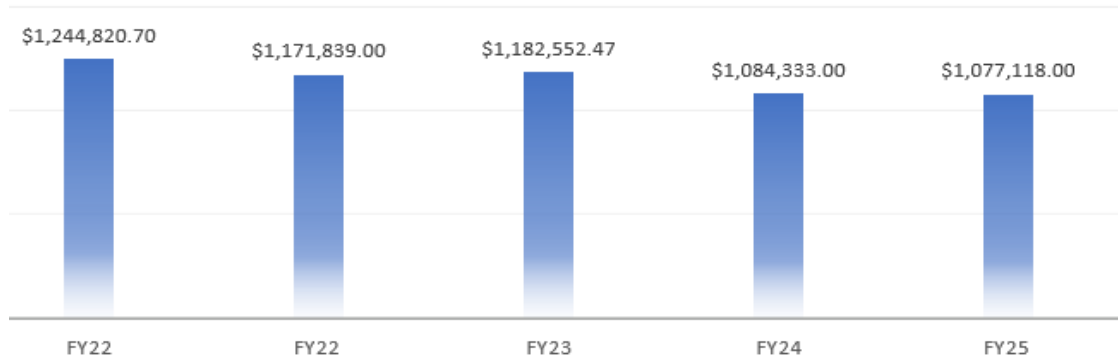


Budget

FY25 Audited Expenditures At June 30, 2025				
Category		2025 Budget	Expenditures	% Expended
200	PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,452,300.00	1,342,339.00	92.43%
300	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	1,427,300.00	930,067.00	65.16%
400	OTHER	282,100.00	240,519.00	85.26%
500	OTHER FINANCING USES	116,500.00	116,500	100.00%
Total		3,278,200.00	2,629,425.00	80.21%

FY25 Collected Revenue July 2024 - June 2025		
Revenue Type	General Fund Allotment	TRS Revenue
Subtotal	1,871,400	1,077,118

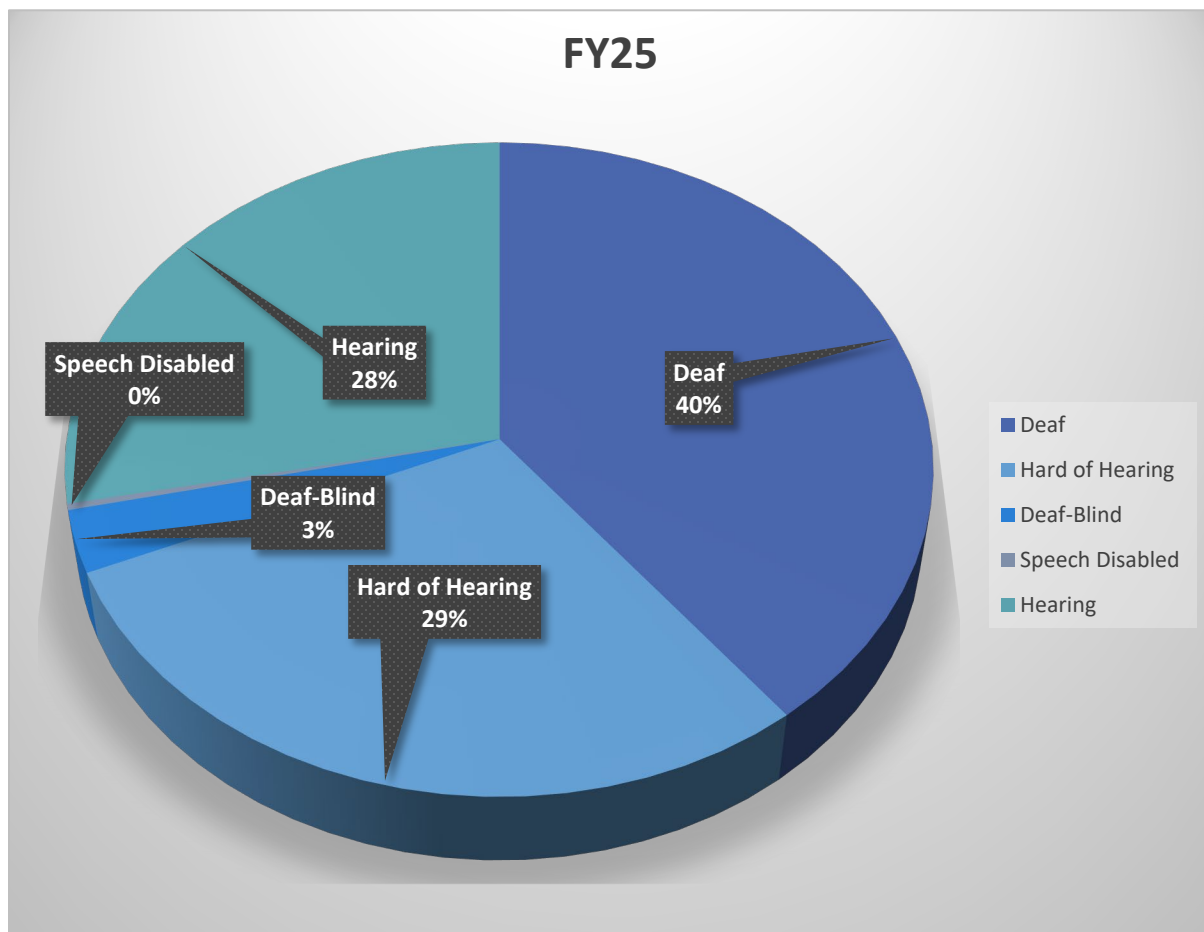
The graph below represents the revenue collected from the TR fund from FY22-FY25
The TRS revenue continues to decline





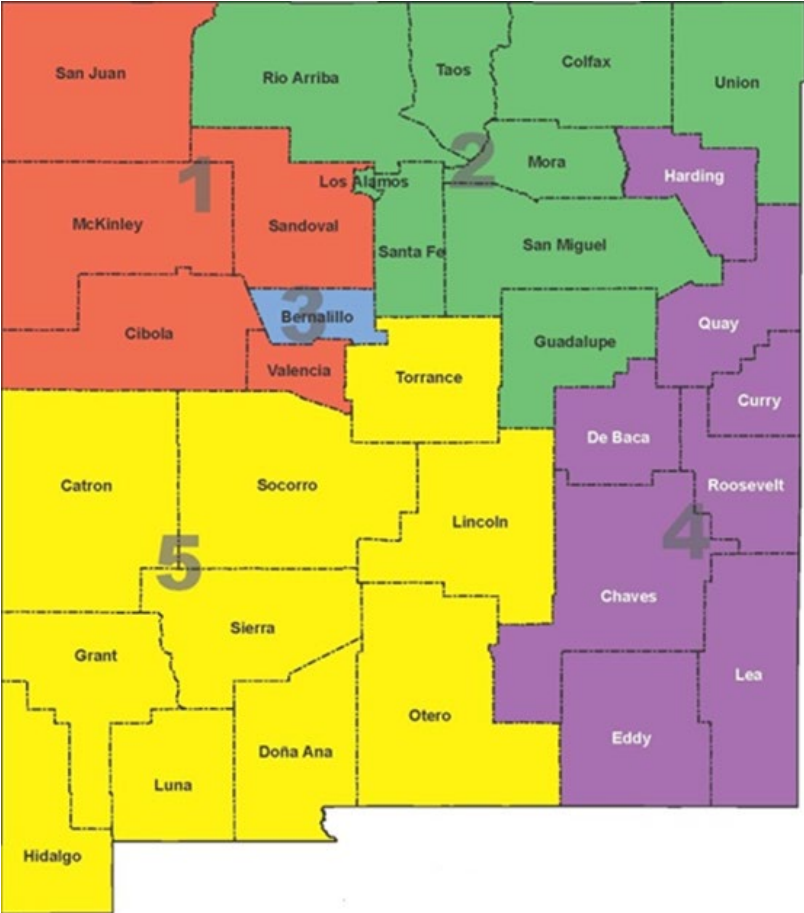
Community Member Statistics

Community Members by Self-Identified Disability



NMCDHH Served 327 Individuals in FY25

Community Members by Region



Region 1 – 18
Region 2 – 23
Region 3 – 157
Region 4 – 12
Region 5 – 117



Contact Information

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