

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
Annual Family Support Plan Report – FY16

OVERVIEW OF FAMILY SUPPORT

MCDHH defines “family support” as those services offered by the Commission within its statutory mandate and subject to legislative appropriation that provide assistance, education, training, and planning to the families of deaf and hard of hearing residents of the Commonwealth, as the term “families” is defined in Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002.

MCDHH has four components that currently provide a number of family support services:

1. Case Management Services

Children’s Specialists

MCDHH has Children’s Specialists which provide services to families statewide. They help families identify needs and assist them in working with other agencies for the betterment of their children. They also consult with, or provide training to, other agencies about the special needs of children who are deaf or have hearing loss.

The department also provides:

- Cross-agency case coordination
- Crisis intervention (including assistance on the protection phase of abuse cases)
- Specialized information and referrals regarding communication access and services available to deaf, late-deafened and hard of hearing people and families
- Client needs assessment by specialized, bilingual staff
- Client plan development (cross-agency)
- Individual case work (intensive, complex cases)
- Chapter 688 transitional case management
- Personal counseling (bilingual staff)
- Development of resources and natural support systems
- Outreach/case finding
- Individual consumer education
- Certification services
- Case management for ‘gap’ populations, such as visually disabled, deaf/hard of hearing persons, less-than-severely mentally ill, deaf/hard of hearing persons, uneducated deaf/hard of hearing persons, or immigrants

2. Interpreter/CART Referral Services

MCDHH also administers the Interpreter and CART (Communication Access Real Time) Referral Services. These services are vital to deaf and hard of hearing families because they provide communication access for deaf and hard of hearing children and adults in a variety of public settings.

3. Communication Access, Training, and Technology Services (CATTS)

- Provides public education on all issues related to hearing loss
- Provides free communication accessibility training and technical assistance to state agencies, other public entities, and private entities seeking to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provides general information related to the needs and services of Deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing people

4. Independent Living Programs

MCDHH contracts with Independent Living Programs throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to provide the following services to deaf and hard of hearing people and their families:

- Skills training
- Self-advocacy training
- Peer mentoring/counseling
- Alternative support and recreational services
- Topical workshops for consumer education and advocacy

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING “SUBSTANTIAL CONSULTATION” FROM FAMILIES REGARDING FLEXIBLE SUPPORT NEEDS

MCDHH makes use of the following mechanisms to gather information from deaf and hard of hearing people and their families about their support needs:

- Issues and concerns are discussed at Statewide Advisory Council (SAC) meetings on a regular basis as well as through ongoing meetings with DHILS providers. Parents are represented on MCDHH’s Statewide Advisory Council.
- Parents serve and provide input as members of the Legislative Task Force, a subcommittee of the MCDHH Statewide Advisory Council.
- Ongoing individual conversations and consultations with families utilizing MCDHH programs and services.
- Ongoing information gathered by Case Management staff and Independent Living Services program staff.
- Children’s Specialists and other staff attend various state and private meetings and workgroups with agencies including DMH, DPH, DTA, DCF, DDS and CBHI and obtain information regarding what is happening with families in the community.

FOCUS AREAS

I. Family Empowerment

Ongoing Activities:

- MCDHH Case Managers and IL Specialists in Deaf/Hard of Hearing Independent Living Skills Programs (DHILS) programs throughout the Commonwealth continue to work closely with Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers and their families to empower them by providing them with training and supports in order to develop their Independent Living Skills.

- DHILS continue to provide information and support on parenting skills to families with Deaf or hard of hearing children.
- MCDHH continues to participate in at least two Town Meetings annually. Town Meetings are hosted by local community agencies statewide and are an important means of collecting information regarding questions and concerns from our constituents regarding current legislation, changes in service delivery, and local information and resources which have an impact on residents. During FY 15, MCDHH hosted 11 statewide sessions to gather input from consumers, including parents and families.

II. Family Leadership

Ongoing Activities:

- Children’s Specialists and the parent training coordinator attend many of the IEP meetings with the parents to provide advocacy and training regarding the rights of their deaf and hard of hearing children.
- Children’s Specialists and the parent training coordinator will continue to provide training on the IEP process and the rights of parents.
- Case Managers and Children’s Specialists will provide information on Chapter 171 to families.

III. Family Support Resources and Funding

Ongoing Activities:

- MCDHH will continue to provide information to families on MRC’s Assistive Technology Loan Program (Money and/or Equipment).
- MCDHH will continue to provide training in the public school systems on making classroom and curriculum accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students according to IDEA and the National Guidelines for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

IV. Accessing Services and Supports

Ongoing Activities:

- MCDHH’s Communications Access, Training and Technology Services Department (CATTS) continues to provide public education on all issues related to hearing loss. In particular, CATTS conducts extensive public outreach targeted to providing free communications accessibility training.
- The Case Management Services Department and CATTS Department work collaboratively to do outreach to historically underserved regions by actively participating in community events sponsored by diverse population groups.
- MCDHH will continue to submit articles to the Deaf Community News and other consumer –run publications to connect readers with new initiatives at MCDHH and encourage family involvement
- MCDHH will continue to provide resources and information to families.

Culturally Competent Outreach and Support

Ongoing Activities:

- MCDHH continues to identify and utilize resources for case managers to access foreign language interpreters to facilitate communication between signing/English speaking staff and parents and families who speak a different language, in accordance with the agency's Language Access Plan.
- MCDHH staff attend conferences statewide for outreach and support services.

V. Interagency Collaborations

Ongoing Activities:

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

- Improve the quality of teacher sign language communication through use of the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) as a condition of employment among teachers working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children;
- Improve the quality of sign language interpreting by educational interpreters through use of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) as a condition of employment among interpreters working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children;

Department of Children & Families:

- Ongoing case management collaboration from both agencies;
- Improving and or developing new policies and procedures for obtaining and using qualified interpreters;

Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

- Continue the ISA between MCDHH and the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) in which MCDHH allocates annual funding for communication access for Deaf people who need to substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

Department of Public Health/Early Intervention Program

- MCDHH is a mandated member of the Department of Public Health's Newborn Hearing Screening Council, which allows both agencies to work more closely with providers to improve identification of and service delivery for families with Deaf or hard of hearing children. As a result, families of Deaf/hard of hearing children receive information and referral to services as soon as there is identification of a hearing loss.

Department of Mental Health

- MCDHH works very closely with DMH for ongoing collaboration, cross-agency training and technical assistance to improve services for Deaf/hard of hearing individuals. This includes working on the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative to assess program capacity to work with deaf and hard of hearing children and adolescents in need of mental health services.

Executive Office of the Trial Court

- MCDHH has an agreement with the Executive Office of the Trial Court to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals have equal and full access to the trial courts. The partnership focuses on expediting interpreter requests for the courts, increasing the number of qualified legal interpreters who are available to serve in this capacity, and improving the administrative operations of both agencies to reduce barriers to access.

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance

- The Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) funds a consultant based at MCDHH who provides for specialized hearing and auditory services for victims injured at the Boston Marathon. A specialized advocate connects victims with services in their areas that include audiograms, comprehensive evaluations, and the development of long-term treatment plans to assist with injuries relating to hearing loss; also provide referrals for additional resources and identifies resources for out of state victims.

Transition to Work with Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

- MCDHH collaborates with MRC to provide summer opportunities for approximately 35 Deaf or Hard of Hearing students, to provide work experience and coaching. MCDHH has an ISA with MRC to coordinate this program which includes communication access for members of the program.

Executive Office of Health & Human Services

- MCDHH works closely with all EHS agencies for ongoing collaboration, education and advocacy to improve service delivery for Deaf/hard of hearing individuals, including the One Care (MassHealth plus Medicare) Workgroup, DPC v. MA Workgroup, MRC/MCB/MCD Joint Consumer Conference, Emergency Preparedness, and the Chapter 688 Coordinator Workgroup.