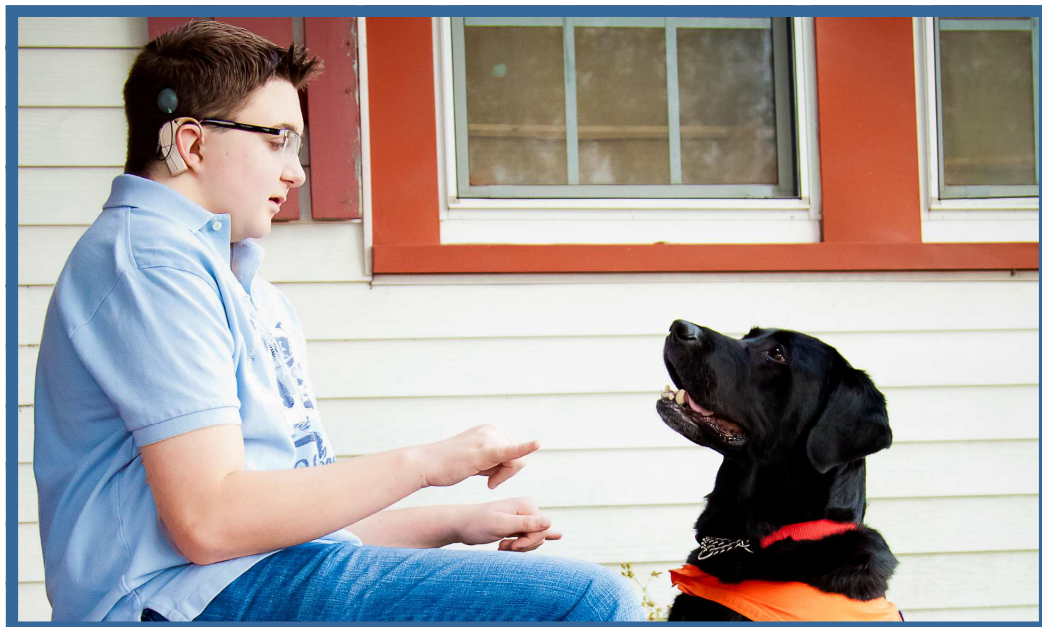




**BIENNIAL  
REPORT  
TO THE  
FLORIDA  
GOVERNOR  
AND  
LEGISLATURE**

## **THE FLORIDA COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

# **2013 REPORT**



## **What We Do**

The Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, hereinafter referred to as the “Coordinating Council,” is mandated by F.S. § 413.271 to serve as an advisory and coordinating body which recommends policies that address the needs of Florida’s community who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened or have combined hearing and vision loss. The Coordinating Council is a resource for Floridians who are deaf and hard of hearing, particularly those requiring some assistance with everyday needs, including (but not limited to), education, employment, and emergency preparedness. Whether providing technical assistance to individuals, government agencies and other private or public organizations, or providing resources that enable individuals to help themselves, the Coordinating Council is dedicated to assisting the nearly 3 million Floridians affected by hearing loss. The Coordinating Council’s technical assistance allows both public and private entities to better and more efficiently serve persons with hearing loss and their families. This information can also help those entities avoid costly litigation resulting from violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other laws and statutes that provide for protection of civil rights.

## **Who Contacts The Council For Help?**

PARENTS  
SENIOR CITIZENS  
NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATIONS  
GOVERNOR’S HURRICANE CONFERENCE  
PEOPLE CONTEMPLATING ON RELOCATING TO FLORIDA  
BOSTON RED SOX (SPRING TRAINING)  
U.S. ARMY COMMANDER/ LEWIS-McCHORD, WA  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS  
VIDEO PRODUCTION COMPANIES  
PHYSICIANS’ OFFICES  
ATTORNEYS  
WEDDING PLANNERS  
FL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
FL DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
FL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
FL BUREAU OF TUBERCULOSIS AND REFUGEE HEALTH  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

(To name just a few....)

# Education

In educational settings (birth through post-secondary age), individuals with hearing loss have been severely underestimated in their ability to learn at the same rate as their hearing peers.

## Issues:

- The quality of educational interpreter services directly impacts the quality of education for students with hearing loss.
- Many mainstreamed students do not receive necessary FM systems, nor are the majority of classrooms equipped with sound field systems.
- Many students with more severe hearing loss are deprived of an opportunity to earn an academic diploma and are placed in certificate programs instead.
- Teachers, administrators, school audiologists and service providers are not properly trained in or aware of the latest technologies that can be used in a classroom setting.
- Students often wear hearing aids that do not work properly, attend school without their hearing aids, and/or have FM systems that do not function properly.
- There is a lack of trained educators, interpreters and other support personnel capable of adequately assisting students with hearing loss.

## Currently:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that children with hearing loss receive individualized educational plans (IEPs).
- More classrooms are being equipped with sound field systems so that all students benefit and those with hearing loss are not singled out.
- Secondary and post-secondary schools (trade schools, vocational schools, and universities) may provide accommodations such as note takers, tutors, sign language interpreters, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), pocket talkers and/or FM systems.

## What remains to be done:

- Provision of professional educators trained in the latest technologies to ensure that students can properly use classroom equipment and maximize their learning.
- Development of measures to evaluate and monitor professional standards for teachers, educational interpreters, CART providers, note takers, etc.
- Increased resources for support personnel in the classroom.
- Additional funding for the training of professionals and paraprofessionals to work with children who have hearing loss and their families.
- Support for children and families across all educational and communication modalities.
- Use of books with more graphics/pictures/descriptions for students who are deaf-blind.
- Aid for young adults with hearing loss to help them transition into college or the workforce.

*"I cannot begin to thank you enough for the wonderful resources on your [web page].... My campers absolutely loved it. It was perfect to help with getting ready for our Health Week at Camp!"*

—An Educator at Camp Price in Wisconsin

# Employment

Floridians with hearing loss are tremendously underutilized in the workforce. Those who do have jobs are often employed in the manual labor area which requires minimal communication and provides no opportunity for further advancement.

## Issues:

- 42% of individuals of ages 18 – 44 years with severe to profound hearing loss were unemployed (compared to 18% of the general population).\*
- 54% of individuals of ages 45 – 64 years with severe to profound hearing loss were unemployed (compared to 27% of the general population).\*
- 23% of individuals with a hearing loss report that their hearing loss has affected their success in the workplace. The most common difficulties reported were hearing and understanding phone calls (64%) and communications with co-workers (61%).\*
- 27% report that their hearing loss negatively affected their earning potential. \*

\*Gallaudet University



## Currently:

- During the 2011 – 2012 state fiscal year, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provided services to 4,936 individuals with hearing loss (including deaf-blind individuals) and, of this number, 520 (10%) were successfully served and placed.
- Local Workforce Centers, Deaf Service Centers and One-Stop Centers are available to assist individuals looking for employment.

## What remains to be done:

- Increase vocational education opportunities to improve the likelihood of employment.
- Improve collaboration between state employment agencies and local providers to promote the hiring of individuals with hearing loss.
- Enhance compliance with the ADA by employers with 15 or more employees. This includes making their facilities accessible to individuals with hearing loss.
- Develop a plan to train counselors to work with individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss.

*“...thank you for your part in the January 20th hearing loss training conducted for the counselors.... Your presentation, contributions and materials utilized in this training played a valuable role in updating the staff on latest industry practices.”*

—Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Area 4 Team

# Emergency Preparedness

State and local emergency managers have not consistently met their obligations to provide effective communication for individuals with hearing loss before, during, and in the aftermath of emergencies.

## Issues:

- Public information is often not accessible. Few local TV stations provide both captioning and sign language interpreters.
- Re-broadcasts from local stations often eliminate the sign language interpreter in their edited versions.
- Closed captioning, when provided, often obscures critical information.
- Shelters often do not have the necessary resources to meet the needs of individuals with hearing loss.
- Florida residents are frequently unaware that their needs must be accommodated at shelters and disaster recovery centers.

## Currently:

- The Coordinating Council communicates with governmental organizations, service providers, and advocacy organizations to meet the functional needs of citizens with hearing loss during emergency and disaster situations.
- Ongoing collaboration and training with state, county, and local emergency managers and first responders to eliminate communication barriers and to provide critical information to emergency management professionals as well as private citizens.
- There are a few shelters which have been designated for persons needing accommodations for hearing loss.



## What remains to be done:

- Collaborate with state and local agencies to identify resources and to develop standards for provision of accessible services to those with hearing loss.
- Provide training to state and local emergency management agencies and local television stations regarding effective methods to disseminate emergency information in an accessible manner.
- Continue sharing the needs of Floridians who have hearing loss with national organizations such as the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI), and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).
- Educate residents with hearing loss on how to access public information and prepare themselves before, during, and after disasters or emergencies and on how to request necessary accommodations.



# Statewide Contributions of the Coordinating Council

Provision of reports and advice to the Governor, Supreme Court, and Legislature of the State of Florida on the needs of persons with hearing loss (see biennial reports, available at the Council's website under [www.fccdhh.org/documents-for-download.html](http://www.fccdhh.org/documents-for-download.html))

Creation and distribution of public service announcements and brochures regarding hearing health and the rights of Floridians with hearing loss

Provision of training to consumer groups on overcoming communication barriers and improving accessibility

Provision of training to individuals with hearing loss about emergency preparedness (e.g., 2012 Communication Access Expo)

Provision of training to emergency management and first responder agencies

Provision of education and training curricula to law enforcement agencies, associations, and commissions

Creation of Advisory Committee and provision of education and training to the Department of Children and Families

Development of comprehensive training manual and video used to address the provision of medical services to individuals with hearing loss

Delivery of medical communication trainings and in-services to hospitals, palliative care facilities, and children's medical groups

Provision of content and technical assistance regarding hearing loss to the Governor's Commission on Disabilities (2008, 2009, 2010)

Maintenance of a comprehensive website ([www.fccdhh.org](http://www.fccdhh.org)) for information, education and referral



Making a Difference...

*"The basic communication strategies page from your site is a wonderful and concise tool—thank you for including it as a .pdf to share."*

—Education Director, Hippodrome Theatre

# Current Members and Staff of the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

## **Council Members:**

**Florida Association of the Deaf:** Donna Drake

**Florida Association of the Deaf:** Position Vacant

**Hearing Loss Association of Florida:** Judy G. Martin

**Hearing Loss Association of Florida:** Richard N. Williams, Esq.

**Association of Late-Deafened Adults:** Chris Littlewood, M.Ed.

**An Individual Who Is Deaf and Blind:** L. Darlene Laibl-Crowe

**A Parent of an Individual Who is Deaf:** Position Vacant

**Deaf Service Center Association:** Lori Timson

**Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf:** Terri Schisler, CI and CT, M.Ed.

**Alexander Graham Bell Association of Florida:** Sherilyn M. Adler, Ph.D., Chair

**Communication Access Realtime Translator:** Position Vacant

**Licensed Audiologist:** Cindy Simon, Au.D., Vice-Chair

**Hearing Aid Specialist:** Position Vacant

**Department of Children and Families:** John M. Jackson, Assistant General Counsel

**Department of Health:** John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS

**Department of Education:** Cecil F. Bradley, Ph.D.

**Department of Elder Affairs:** Eloise H. Williams, Senior Management Analyst II

## **Staff:**

Melvena N. Wilson, DrPH, MPH, CHES, **DOH Liaison**

Mary Grace Tavel, **Program Administrator**

For more information about the Coordinating Council or hearing loss, visit [www.fccdhh.org](http://www.fccdhh.org)

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