

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD**  
State Surgeon General

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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**FLORIDA COORDINATING COUNCIL  
FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING  
Quarterly Meeting**

Betty Easley Conference Center  
Room 182

4075 Esplanade Way  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 1–5 p.m.

Friday, February 13, 2025, 9 a.m.–noon

**Council Members:**

Glenna Ashton, Chair, Florida Association of the Deaf (Virtual)

Cory Parker, Vice-Chair, Florida Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation

Chris Littlewood, Association of Late-Deafened Adults

John Jackson, Florida Department of Children and Families

Jenny Rojas, Florida Department of Elder Affairs (Virtual)

Cindy Simon, Audiologist licensed under part I of Chapter 468 (Virtual)

**Florida Department of Health (DOH) Staff:**

Towana Reddick, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention

Chealsie Paiano-Wonsey, Liaison, Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCCDHH)

**Service Providers:**

Bronwyn Shew, (On-Site Interpreter, Absolute Quality Interpreting Services (AQI))

Brooke Jensen, (On-Site Interpreter, AQI)

Clint Solomon, (On-Site Interpreter, AQI)

Kelly Gagain, (On-Site Interpreter, AQI)

Janelle Barnes, (Virtual Interpreter, AQI)

James Pope, (Virtual Interpreter, AQI)

Chris Costa, (Virtual Interpreter, AQI)

Lisa Johnston, Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART)

Patrick Langan (Vanguard Audiovisual)

**Presenters:**

Dawn Moore, Disability Rights of Florida

Colleen Metcalf, Centers for Independent Living (CIL)

Michael Yelapi, CIL

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**Florida Department of Health**  
**Division of Community Health Promotion**  
**Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention**  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-18 • Tallahassee, FL 32399  
PHONE: 850/245-4330  
**FloridaHealth.gov**



**Accredited Health Department**  
Public Health Accreditation Board

**November Meeting Minutes Review:** Minutes are accepted by the council.

**Committee Updates:**

- Ad Hoc – Bylaws: No update/On hold.
- Education, Medical, Outreach and Technology: No update, but would like to create pamphlets or a PSA in the future.
- Legislative: Glenna informs other council members, she will be out of country for legislative week Cory responds, he will attend to represent FCCDHH.
- Web: With the webpage having just undergone major changes, Council members are re-tasked with reviewing the DOH-FCCDHH website and forward recommended edits, revisions, or images to Chealsie.

**Organization Updates:**

- Florida Association of the Deaf (FAD): Cancelled their 49<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, due to very low registration numbers, but will now be doing a social event 3/27/2026 in Kissimmee, Florida. Glenna plans to attend, as she will also be attending DeafNation on 3/28/2026.
- Association of the Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) Updates: As of January 1st, the ALDA Suncoast Chapter closed because it requires, under the National Charter, five members for a Board, and they didn't have enough people that were willing to be on a Board. This will be the first time in 30 years that there's no Florida chapter for ALDA.
- Community Update: No update.
- Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (FRID): No update
- Audiologist Representative: No update
- Vocational Rehabilitation: Cory – The Florida Deaf Blind Association (FDBA) next annual meeting will be held in Coco Beach, Florida in 2026. The contact for the meeting is Laura Welch.

**Biennial Report:**

The council members are preparing for the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCCDHH) 2027 Biennial Report. Council members are recommended to identify policy recommendations, data, and a revised layout for the report. Council members are to send all

information and the supporting documentation to Chealsie to ensure all information is captured. Council requests to see a copy of other Biennial Reports from BCDP. May's meeting will be primarily pinning down Biennial Report details/layout. Council is reminded, look for statistics that can be used and brainstorm all activities FCCDHH has participated in in the last 2 years.

**Public Comments:** Anthony Verdeja – A) The requirement currently for vehicles is to have alarm systems that are based on the horn for sound, for any time the inspection of the vehicle is done for the day, with dropping off children, to ensure that there's no child left in the vehicle.

The alarm concept is important and needed. But we try to get modifications so that the vehicle would be able to use a flashing light system instead of a horn-based system.

And because of the statutes, I understand we were told no.

So, I'm not sure how that type of information can be conveyed up the chain, to have either modifications to requirements and/or the ability to make sure that when you're dealing with staff who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing, a horn ringing does not work effectively.

B.) Pinellas County Schools recently made some modifications and changes to schools that are closing due to low enrollment.

And that one of the longest d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing programs at Cross Bayou Elementary had been there for 40 years and that particular elementary school is closing.

And so the d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing children, the teachers, the aides, the audiologists, speech pathologists are now going to be moot and within the district and there are impacts then that the d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing kids that were all being brought to that one location for self-contained classroom experiences will now be put in different programs throughout the county.

I don't know if the Florida Coordinating Council is able or -- I guess able to look into that situation, to figure out how they can ensure that families do continue to have support and are aware of all of the resources, at not just the Pinellas County level, but truly at the state level.

One of my concerns is that this process happened, it won't go into effect until next fall in that school year, and I don't know of anything currently locally that is happening for additional support and education of the families

### **DOH Updates:**

- New Meeting Registration Requirement – With the recent security issues at previous meetings, DOH has implemented a new registration process to attend/gain access to meetings. The registration form can be found on the webpage and must be completed and sent to the ZZZ box (minimum) 3 days prior to the meeting. This is required whether attending virtually or in person.
- FCCDHH ZZZZ Feedback Inbox – DOH approved a new direct inbox for resource requests posted on the council webpage. Chealsie and Towana have access to ensure all requests are handled in a timely manner.
- DeafNation Exhibitor Table – The PO for the exhibitor has officially been approved and paid. Glenna and Chealsie will attend the event, March 28, 2026, in Kissimmee Florida, representing FCCDHH as well as a chance to recruit for open positions.
- Educational Items – The Council all agreed previously, phone stands would be a awesome educational product to help promote who FCCDHH is. These items are due to arrive before DeafNation, so they will be available to hand out while recruiting.

- Chealsie gave laminated tax exemptions cards to council members to utilize for future FCCDHH travel, when applicable.
- The council members revisited section 413.271, Florida Statute to ensure council activities are aligned with the purpose and activities outlined in statute, such as council membership recruitment, identifying policy recommendations and conducting advocacy and activities to address the need for services and resources for deaf and hard of hearing populations. This serves as guidance to refocus future meetings and activities moving forward.

### **FCCDHH Future Activities, Meetings, and Planning:**

- Policy Idea – Deaf drivers have a ‘class’ on their DL; to let law enforcement know they are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Council members are re-tasked with increasing recruiting efforts to fill the 17 FCCDHH council seats. Council members will actively recruit and share the applicant information with DOH.
- Council requests Disability Rights of Florida be added to webpage ASAP.
- Council members are tasked with providing 2-3 policies each for possible recommendations at the May meeting.
- Highlight the need for sign language interpreters for Congress. This is a highly discussed topic.
- Council requests a physical timeline to work on building the Biennial Report.
- Next Meeting: **Virtual – May 14, 2026, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Meeting Adjourned