

# DHHSC Community Feedback Report 2016

Two parts included below:

Section A: Informal minutes from our last Community Comments

Section B: Summary of information collected from our Evaluation forms for fiscal year 2015-2016

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## Section A: Community Comments - August 20, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:33pm

### Vote for Fresno Advisory Council

- o Two positions available
- o Current members discussed the potential conflict of interest of having husband and wife both serve as Advisory Council members while others asserted that it would be discrimination to vote against a potential candidate because of marital status.
- o Individuals applying for the Advisory Council
  - Tracy - Won first round of election
  - Coyle - Won second round of election
  - Barry - Not selected

### Evaluation form for DHHSC (Jesse Lewis)

- o These are the responses that came in from the previous year, and they are shared by everyone throughout our service area. The highlights and concerns I will share were the major points we noted from our evaluation forms. Many of the comments were repeated, but the comments identified here were the main points of feedback.
- o In order to be transparent, Peter Crume, the Board Secretary, first reviewed all the evaluation forms and summarized the highlights and concerns and then submitted the findings and evaluation forms back to us.
- o **Highlights**
  - o The community expressed positive view of staff and services, as well as groups and events.
  - o The community always wants more events and workshops on a variety of topics.
- o **Concerns**
  - The community sometimes has feedback about specific events, so DHHSC may need to collect feedback at each event or workshop and then use that information the next time we hold an event or workshop.

- One concern was that there are not enough interpreters available in Merced.
- The full detail of feedback gathered from the evaluation forms will be posted next month on our website.

## Community Comments

Michelle Bronson- We are now open to Community Comments, and I would like to invite people to come up to the front of the room and express any concerns they may have.

Tim Spires - Historically, DHHSC has provided services, and it's usually the same group of people who come for services. I would like to see DHHSC provide more education to the community, especially to members of the hearing community. I feel that by educating the hearing community, it would provide a better understanding of Deaf-related issues.

Darci Lessard - We need more opportunities for Deaf senior citizens to interact with each other. I would like to propose additional events for Deaf senior citizens.

Jane Lessard - I am concerned about CODAs. I feel they need help with finding services, and DHHSC needs to provide support to CODAs.

Shelley Stout - In response to Darci's comments, we need more volunteers to help with senior citizens.

Robyn Kifer - I feel we need to invite community professionals to DHHSC because it is hard to access them at their offices without interpreters. For example, we sometimes have issues with water (i.e., the water is discolored), and there are also safety issues, such as with the police and fire departments.

Darci Lessard- I feel that if DHHSC could have a van, that would help with transporting senior citizens.

Michelle Bronson - We would love to have a van, and it has been a long-time dream, but unfortunately, it's forbidden with our DOR contract. Our contract does not allow us to provide transportation.

Marilyn McCallon - I have been very involved with the senior citizen group for more than 20 years, and there have been a lot of changes over the years that have really affected the group. For example, members of the group used to be able to travel freely, but now it is more difficult for many members. The group is getting smaller as some of our members have passed away. Our oldest member is 96 years old, but the average age is about 75. We now need to cater lunches instead of doing potluck.

Some of our members are also reluctant to try playing new games. I suggest that we get a volunteer to lead the senior citizens group and help with the planning, which could help decrease dissension within the group. Harvey has done an excellent job, but people still argue. I feel that the senior citizens group should be happy.

Skippy Sumner - I have traveled and visited many different senior citizens groups. Perhaps we could visit different agencies within Fresno County, such as the Agency on Aging. They have a "Meals on Wheels" program. They have information on their website about seniors. Many people don't know about what services are available. I also feel that the amount of DHHSC e-mails on Friday afternoons is too overwhelming. I would suggest condensing the six emails into just one.

Janice Smith-Warshaw - I would suggest that Fresno Deaf Community have a Deafhood event.

Jane Lessard - I want to say that I really appreciate the new changes in the lobby. I wanted the fabric chairs removed because of health concerns relating to transferrable diseases. I think it is much better having plastic chairs.

Michelle Bronson - I would like to thank Martha for taking the lead on improving the lobby. It is because of her donation that we were able to purchase new chairs that are easy to clean and maintain. The updated lobby looks more professional, thanks to Martha's donation.

Skippy Sumner - I have been involved with DHHSC since 1994. Many of our members have stayed the same, I feel we need to have new members and recruit others in the community to join.

Darci Lessard - I am wondering where are the young people that are over 18 years old?

Shelley Stout - Many of the young people go to EDD, but not many of them are aware of DHHSC.

Janice Smith-Warshaw - I feel we need to utilize the youth employment fair to reach out to high school students. I also think we need to make DHHSC more friendly and accessible to youth by using social media.

Michelle Bronson - One of the ongoing problems we have is educating the general community. One significant problem is the constant turnover of staff within agencies. For example, we do work a lot with CPS, but they have a lot of turnover. I think a major problem is that previous staff does not share information about DHHSC with the new replacements. I also feel that it's important to follow clients to thoroughly know their history and their issues. An average social worker might be on a case with a deaf client for 3-6 months, and then the deaf client is transferred to a new social worker who has no prior knowledge of the case. In terms of fire department and the police, we did offer to provide training, but the police have stated that the training is not

required for them. In the past, Rosemary and Nikki did training with the fire department, which was nice. We would need to money to conduct a public service announcement.

Jaime Clay - We need to provide training to the local police agency (in Merced).

Shelley Stout - We work closely with CPS, but we often see a staff turnover about every 12-16 months.

Darci Lessard - I heard that the FCC (Fresno City College) police officers are paid more if they are fluent in ASL or another language.

Michelle Bronson - We would love to have a Public Service Announcement (PSA).

Skippy Sumner - What is the process to get a PSA?

Michelle Bronson - We have applied to several grants but have been turned down. We are hoping to get grant funds to cover the cost of a PSA. We are also trying to work with Valley Children's Hospital to get access to families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing babies/toddlers so we can offer our services. We also have baby blankets made by our Sew & Sign Guild to give to these families, and we were able to recently give one to a family with a newly identified Deaf baby. It's rare when we get such an opportunity so we are trying to build our connections.

We also have applied for a grant providing services and social opportunities for senior citizens, and there is another grant due soon, sometimes between September and October. We have been looking for grants, but we are struggling to get these grants. We have applied with Kaiser for health-related workshops. We have applied to another one related to the Deaf-Blind and senior citizens. It is difficult to get grants because there is a lot of competition. I have talked with different CEOs and gotten feedback. One CEO from Central Valley Regional Foundation stated that we have a high cost delivery system, which means the impact per person is low. For example, Omar works longer per client because he has to provide additional information. A funder would rather donate money to help 500 people instead of just 20 Deaf people.

Skippy Sumner - Can you talk about your contact with the Agency on Aging?

Michelle Bronson - We know about Meals on Wheels. Many people do not like the food because it's bland. We are not allowed to provide transportation. In terms of CODAs, we do provide services. We serve all individuals from "womb to tomb."

Shelley Stout - The number of CODAs have increased in the Valley, but what about Deaf children of Deaf parents?

Michelle Bronson - The numbers are very small. For example, Joelene (Spires) and I are the only two Deaf families with Deaf children in CUSD (Clovis Unified School District) that I know of.

Darci Lessard - How many Deaf people in the Valley do you serve from “womb to tomb”?

Michelle Bronson - There’s about 178,000 Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in our service region.

Darci Lessard - And only about 200 interpreters.

Tim Spires - It goes back to education. Like I’m saying, we need to educate the hearing community.

Jaime Clay - We need trilingual interpreters.

Michelle Bronson - We have a small number of interpreters who work for many different agencies, and they are spread thin.

Tim Spires - It’s hard to hire interpreters when it’s only a 12-month contract, such as with the EDD job announcement for an EDD Staff Interpreter.

Michelle Bronson - We are confident we will continue receiving EDD funding. We are committed to making the EDD program successful, so we are trying to encourage interpreters to apply. We also do need more games for senior citizens.

Darci Lessard - One idea would be to play Mahjong.

Michelle Bronson - In regards to DHHSC e-mails, we are familiar with the issue. We’ve tried different approaches. We’ve tried with just one email, but it was really long, and people complained. We’ve tried individual e-mails, and people complained. We feel that it’s better to have more e-mails than not enough. We want to keep our community informed. We will have Marilyn be the contact person for the Deaf senior citizens, and we will work with the seniors.

Skippy Sumner - If the seniors have a smartphone, try developing some type of notification system through text.

Darci Lessard - FCC has a text alert system.

Jaime Clay - The school system also has an emergency alert system.

Robyn Kifer - I believe there are apps that you can download for free.

Michelle Bronson - We are adding more workshops, such as Deafhood. We are always focused on maintaining our building, such as the lobby. There always seems to be a domino effect. Once we make a change, then people want other things changed, such as painting the community room. If you would like to donate money for that purpose, then we can do so. We do not have a budget for painting, etc., so we rely on donations.

In terms of youth involvement, it's the same problem for many agencies, not just DHHSC. Many young people do not attend. It's difficult in the Valley because we are removed from actively involved areas, such as Sacramento, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area. We do try to work with young people, such as through our Youth Employment Services (YES!) program. We're limited in our outreach to schools because we're not allowed to take away from the teachers' instructional minutes.

In regards to public relations, it's difficult for us because we don't have a PR position. We're trying to get funding, but it's difficult to get additional funding. Right now our PR is limited to current staff who can share about DHHSC's services wherever they go.

Skippy Sumner - What's the priority? How will you work with staff and the board?

Michelle Bronson - Your question will lead to the next portion of Community Comments that will be led by Dr. Janice Smith-Warshaw.

Michelle Bronson - Technology is something that we will work on improving. We want to improve our website, community emails, and other notification systems.

Tim Spires - I feel that DHHSC should work directly with clients to improve their knowledge of technology.

Coyle Long - I feel we need to educate the schools through DHHSC website and educate them about providing videophones for students at the schools.

Michelle Bronson - We do provide information to students and schools about videophones. I feel it is important to provide information to students about videophones so they can have access to communication. However, we must prioritize our time, as DSS states our top priority is to provide core services, which means less time on upgrading our technology or teaching others about technology.

Tim Spires - NorCal seems very active. They seem to have a lot of things going on.

Michelle Bronson - I agree with you but NorCal has both a PR person and an IT person. We have to make decisions about prioritizing services, technology, or PR.

Tim Spires - I think it should be PR. We should get more money.

Michelle Bronson - You talked about serving the same clients. The old model was the Helper Model, but now we use the Client-Centered Model to empower them. The younger the client, the quicker they learn. Clients vary in the amount of services they need.

Tim Spires - Is DSS funding used to pay for both staffing and interpreting? Do they overlap in terms of funding?

Michelle Bronson - Most of our services overlap. We use teamwork between staff and interpreters. Service providers advocate for communication access, to provide interpreters, and interpreters share about DHHSC's services and events. It's a two-way street.

Tim Spires - It makes sense. I was just curious to see how the money is used.

Michelle Bronson - We are always careful to be transparent. The work staff does is proportional to their CDSS and grant responsibilities. Now, we will prioritize the different needs that are listed. Janice Smith Warshaw will lead the discussion as our Board President.

Janice Smith Warshaw - What do you all feel are needs that must be addressed first?

## **#1 Deafhood**

Janice Smith Warshaw - There two branches -

- A) The first is primarily focused on D/HH individuals and their journey.
- B) The second is focused on interpreters and their relationship with the D/HH community as allies.

Tim Spires - I had problems with Deafhood. They told me I was not deaf enough. I also saw bad attitudes, such as Deaf people saying that interpreters work for them.

Janice Smith Warshaw - Deafhood has changed. The original version did state that the mainstreamed deaf were not Deaf enough, but in the recent Deafhood 201 meeting I attended, I saw a big change. Deafhood used to have multiple facilitators, but now have two. The person who leads workshop for the west coast is Butch Zein. Would you feel comfortable using him?

(People in audience agreed)

Skippy Sumner - Butch Zein did come here in 1995/1996.

Janice Smith Warshaw - We will contact Butch Zein. His fees are not cheap. I paid \$175 for a session Thursday from 6-10 pm, Friday from 6-10 pm, and then all day on both Saturday and Sunday. The maximum number of people that can attend would be 12.

The community members voted and selected the priorities that DHHSC should focus on, in the order of importance:

#1 Deafhood

#2 Educating the public

#3 Public relations, DHHSC website, community recruitment, reducing e-mails

#4 Social opportunities and services for senior citizens

#5 Services for CODAs

**Meeting adjourned at 2:17pm**

Draft respectfully submitted by Peter Crume, DHHSC Board Secretary.

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## **Section B: Results compiled from our DHHSC Evaluation Forms for Fiscal Year 2015-2016**

1. Percentage of positive answers to the question “Was DHHSC helpful?” = 100%
2. Answers to the question “**What services, events, or workshops do you want?**”:  
ASL 2 classes; crafts; movie events; Netflix; seniors events; Yosemite outing; events in Delhi, Livingston, Turlock, and Atwater; workshops on police, laws, domestic violence, SSA, tax laws, and living trusts; game socials; weekend workshops; holistic medicine; Facebook
3. Answers to the question “**What do you like most about the DHHSC?**”:  
Staff are awesome, helpful, courteous, friendly, responsive, enthusiastic, good people, wonderful, nice to all, cool, friendly, and happy; Staff show they care about people, give good advice, treat community like family, really work hard, provide good services; Education, updated new information, and workshops; social games, including Bingo and Dingo; services such as ROCK and home visits; the provision of Spanish interpreters; VP access; diversity; the wide variety of events; regular classes such as ASL and DMV classes; the opportunities to volunteer; socializing with friends in the lobbies or community rooms
4. Answers to the question “**How can DHHSC be better?**”:

More Deaf community events and workshops; more hours and facilities available; improve WiFi access; improve DMV classes; services to help community feel like “normal persons within our community by providing services, consulting, and professional development;” security guards; improve Holiday Luncheon in Fresno; better air conditioning in Merced; improve time in returning calls; more prompt with setting appointments; more food at events; offer carpooling

5. Answers to the question **“What concerns or problems would you like to share?”**:  
Wish for DHHSC to have services in Modesto; sometimes difficult to get attention from staff to set up an appointment; some interpreters need to improve expressions and body language; people charging their phones at DHHSC; not enough self-advocacy workshops
6. Answers to the question **“Are DHHSC Staff friendly, respectful, and professional? If not, how can we improve?”**:  
Most comments say YES; staff show respect and professionalism