

## Community Comments – August 18, 2018

Community Comments began with a review of the evaluation forms collected from the community. First, we reviewed the form itself and what it looked like, and then emphasized the need for more evaluations.

We shared what was the same for all four offices:

All evaluation forms except for one responded positively, saying YES to the first 2 questions.

Community feels the staff is friendly, helpful, caring, and a long list of other positive words.

We then shared feedback for each office. The following lists the key points:

Fresno Headquarters:

What services, events, or workshops do you want?

Workshop ideas: Presentations from Police and Fire Departments about their jobs, how to prepare meals, education about cancer, HIV, Sex education, transgender issues, culture, hearing loss education, and technology for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Other events: Zumba, bring zoo animals to DHHSC, game nights, movie nights, ASL classes, sports

Other request: Child care during workshops

What do you like most about DHHSC?

Being able to communicate with staff through ASL

The many activities that we offer

Our Literacy program

Socializing with other Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Deaf Blind Support Group

Cochlear Implant Support Group

DMV class (for those who seek to pass their Written test for a driver license)

The available flyers on the wall in the lobby because they are easily accessible

How can DHHSC be better?

More fun activities with less down time between

Advertise more

New technology (This was not specific as to what technology is needed)

More funding

New air conditioner for the Fresno office

Be open-minded to all

Be happy

What concerns or problems would you like to share?

None given

South Valley Outreach:

What services, events, or workshops do you want?

Workshop ideas: Informational workshop about apps for phone, CPR, First responder presentations, arts and crafts, sewing class

Other events: ASL poetry, game nights, Saturday night events, ASL class

What do you like most about DHHSC?

DMV class

How can DHHSC be better?

More flyers for events

What concerns or problems would you like to share?

The room is too small for workshops

Merced Outreach:

What services, events, or workshops do you want?

Workshop ideas: No new ones. Current workshops were mentioned.

Other events: Crafts

What do you like most about DHHSC?

The Merced game socials

How can DHHSC be better?

Provide soda for purchase

Better air conditioning

What concerns or problems would you like to share?

None given

Central Coast Outreach:

What services, events, or workshops do you want?

Workshop ideas: Job-related topics

Other events: None

What do you like most about DHHSC?

Good customer service

That we help families

How can DHHSC be better?

No suggestions

What concerns or problems would you like to share?

None given

Following the evaluation summary, we reviewed our Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 and used this as the framework for discussion during Community Comments.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center  
Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Increase awareness of the concept of Deafhood in our community

We will arrange for educational training sessions for community members on the subject of Deafhood.

We will support each individual's Deafhood journey as much as possible.

We will apply for funding for Deafhood classes to be provided locally.

Provide system advocacy training to first responders such as law enforcement, fire departments, hospitals, and county social services

Prioritizing hospitals, we will increase our outreach to local community services in order to provide system advocacy on behalf of the community we serve.

Due to high turnover in Child Protective Services (CPS) departments, we will offer ongoing Deaf-sensitivity training.

Boost awareness of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center through improved PR efforts

Emphasize to all current and future staff, Board members, and advisory council members that each of us is a "walking, talking (signing) PR machine."

Further investigate the possibility of renting a billboard to advertise our services.

Investigate new possible strategies to raise our visibility in the community.

Work to increase the number of community partnerships.

Improve the accessibility of DHHSC's website

We will work to increase the number of video blogs (vlogs) that we post on the website, which are in American Sign Language, the more accessible language for our community. The videos will also be closed-captioned rather than subtitled, since closed-captions are more accessible to reading devices used by Deaf Blind community members.

We will improve our consistency with updating Board member rosters and Board meeting minutes.

We will ensure that flyers for upcoming events are more consistently viewable on the home page of the website.

Provide more activity-oriented events for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Senior Citizens

At the request of our Deaf Senior citizens, we will work with local leaders to plan trips that support their goals of enlarging and enriching their life experiences.

At the request of some Deaf Senior citizens, we will find volunteers to teach new games for the local Deaf Seniors to play during their weekly socials at our Headquarters, which improve their sense of community and desire to learn new things.

We will increase the frequency of workshops targeted to the life issues of our Deaf Seniors.

Provide services for young children of Deaf adults (KODAs)

At the request of parents, we will plan and facilitate more events specifically for KODAs.

We will set up a support group for KODAs.

#### Responses to the Strategic Goals:

The Deafhood 101 class facilitated by Deafhood Foundation may be offered again, through DHHSC, for new people to join. The current plan is to host the next four-day training session in late January/early February, depending on Deafhood trainer's availability.

One community member had a question about why only one service provider works in our Merced office. Michelle Bronson, our Executive Director, responded that budget cuts were the reason for the position elimination.

Michelle indicated that due to the budget augmentation, we will be able to hire six new individuals to focus on client services: five full-time Client Services Specialists and one part-time PR/Outreach Specialist. The PR/Outreach Specialist will work out of the Fresno office but benefit all four of our offices.

When talking about how to draw more people to DHHSC and our events, Michelle mentioned that personal invitations are more impactful than flyers. We encourage all community members to invite families and friends to join us.

One community member suggested that we create event listings on Facebook for all of DHHSC's events because it can boost our visibility and provide us with a sense of how many people might attend. Jesse explained that we do this for large events but our staff generally does not have time to create an event listing for every event, including the smaller workshops. However, our new PR/Outreach Specialist would be able to assist with this challenge.

One community member wants DHHSC to have more exposure in the community so that we are more well known because there have been many times an agency or individual expressed unfamiliarity with DHHSC. Michelle responded that staff turnover at various organizations and businesses, such as at hospitals, is a common reason why some people do not know about DHHSC. We provide training to employees of various organizations and businesses, but when staff changes, the new staff are unaware of us. This will always be a challenge.

Michelle and Jesse Lewis, our Project Director, explained that the website was updated due to community feedback, but no specific changes have been requested. Therefore, we need more direct feedback on desired changes, if any. We are open to feedback as we want our website accessible and attractive.

In regards to promoting the agency and its services, Michelle mentioned that we tend to take advantage of free advertising whenever possible. For example, this year we were able to film a free Public Service Announcement that was professionally filmed and edited. This PSA ran on a local station and is also available on our YouTube channel.

A community member expressed that she would like to see a notice of some kind when new stories or articles are posted on The Deaf Bee, our online newsletter. We suggested that we could include links to new posts in our community e-mails and explained that anyone could submit articles and vlogs that benefit the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community. Articles are not limited to staff only but can be submitted by anyone wanting to share relevant information and news with the community. The community member then asked us to send out an community email to let others know (again) that they can submit articles and vlogs to The Deaf Bee.

A community member suggested that DHHSC create an App for phones to promote our events and services. We talked about the possibilities of who could create this, since no one on our staff has this ability. One person suggested asking people at CSD Fremont or CSD Riverside, but our Board President Dr. Janice Smith-Warshaw explained that there would be a lot of red tape to deal with before the schools could help. Another idea suggested was to ask a Fresno State University student to volunteer to create such an App.

DHHSC hosted their annual ASL Summer Program in early August for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and kids of Deaf adults (KODAs), which many families enjoyed and said was successful. ASL Summer Program also meets the request for KODA events, but we do need more activities for these children.

We ended the discussion with a request to the community to share suggestions on other ways DHHSC can improve and also reminded them to take the time to fill out an evaluation form.

After the discussion was concluded regarding the Strategic Goals and how DHHSC is doing as a whole, we held an election for new members of the Deaf Services Advisory Council. Jesse asked for members to consider joining and covered the basics of DSAC and how it functions. When one community member asked how information is shared with the Board or the management team from DSAC meetings, it was clarified that the information is first sent to Jesse, who oversees the DSACs, and then is shared with the appropriate person or persons to address the concern.

After encouragement from staff and the Board of Directors, two community members nominated themselves to join and were approved by a show of hands. We now have three members in Fresno and seek five more.