

DHHSC Annual Report for the year of 2022  
(prepared March 2023)

## **Accomplishments**

Our primary funder, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Office of Deaf Access, funds our seven core services, which include Communication Assistance, Counseling, Advocacy, Independent Living Skills Instruction, Job Development and Placement, Information and Referral, and Community Education. As part of our contract with CDSS, we set goals for each of the seven service categories regarding the number of clients we will serve. At the end of each fiscal year, we then provide CDSS with an End-of-Year Report. Our achieved percentages of the goals for the seven categories of services for the most recent year range from 39% to 197%. Our lowest score was for advocacy, which is a less requested service.

Here are the highlights of our grant programs this year:

We were fortunate to continue our **Deaf Thrive** program for another year, funded by Fansler Foundation. This program includes at-home and virtual American Sign Language instruction (ROCK program), employment and college preparation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing high school students (YES! program), IFSP/IEP advocacy, and literacy development.

In 2022, aside from our normal education on employment-related topics for YES! sessions, we had a special competition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. This friendly competition, which we called **Business in a Box**, involved students teaming up to create business concepts. The concepts were explained in presentations by the students, and included mock-ups of their businesses using shoeboxes and any art media chosen. Our staff reviewed each presentation and chose the winning team that we felt had the best concept and presentation based on several criteria. This was a fun way to incorporate the values of teamwork, creativity, and developing an employment mindset.

Overall, it was another successful year for the Deaf Thrive program, which was awarded new funding in October. The current grant year is well underway!

Thanks to support from the Employment Development Department, we were able to continue offering extensive **employment assistance services** to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the

Central Valley for another year. This contract funds one full-time Employment Specialist and one full-time Staff ASL Interpreter. They placed many clients in jobs during 2022 and we are excited to see more clients wanting employment. We hired a new Staff ASL Interpreter, Chris Martinez, in December 2022 after Jane Datsko resigned in November.

**Tech Time** is a program based in the Central Coast Outreach office in Salinas, funded by Harden Foundation, which provides monthly workshops on topics regarding safe use of technology. Examples of workshop topics were Using Social Media and Protecting Your Identity, How to Get Uber/Lyft, and Video Game Issue: Side Effects & Stranger Danger.

We are now in the second year of this program, and will continue through July 2023.

First 5 of Merced County funded our **ASL Friends** program, which provides American Sign Language instruction to children ages 0 to 5 in Merced County. This service is provided to not only Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, but also hearing children. Classes are offered at the Merced office as well as in other locations upon request.

To our surprise, we have had difficulty finding a lot of interest within the community for this service. People in general say they want to learn ASL, but attendance has been low. We continue to strategize for new ways to reach Merced County residents who might be interested in learning ASL. This program continues through the end of June 2023.

United Way of Tulare County funded us for a program called **Deaf Strong**. This program provided monthly webinars on financial topics to Deaf attendees and a monthly support group for parents with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Examples of topics included Learning to Budget Your Money, Discussion with Parents regarding Struggles and Achievements, The Pitfalls of Credit Debt, and How to Avoid Getting in Debt.

This program ended in March 2023. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we did not see as much interest from our community as anticipated.

United Way of Merced County funded **Budget Smart!**, a program for Merced area clients, which provided monthly workshops on financial topics. Examples of topics included Spending Money Online and Through Apps, Benefits Assistance, Returning Items for Refunds, and Common Scams.

Our partnership with a number of local community benefit organizations (CBOs) in Fresno for a Disability Equity Project that focused on COVID-related education, outreach, and support for persons with disabilities and their families in 2021 led to the formation of **Central Valley Disability Services Providers** coalition in 2022, which meets on a quarterly basis to discuss our community's shared needs. The coalition is an opportunity for us to collaborate whenever possible for the benefit of the communities we serve. This has also led to referrals to DHHSC, including interpreting requests once they learned the need for communication access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Late Deafened individuals.

First 5 of Fresno County generously funded us for a third year of **PRAISE KODAtime** program that we created in 2020 to support Deaf parents with KODAs, regardless of whether the children are Deaf or hearing. The format of this program returned to in-person sessions hosted at the Fresno Headquarters after a long period of hosting through Zoom. The sessions are intended to provide parents with more education and resources relevant to parenting and to provide children with opportunities for language development that will further support communication at home. Examples of topics and activities include a Valley Animal Center field trip, discussion about different holiday/cultural traditions, and families participating in our ASL Summer Program.

This program is now in its third year and we are currently seeking participating families, who reside within Fresno County, with parents who are Deaf and have kids ages 0 to 5. We encourage anyone who fits this criteria to contact us for more information about the program.

### **Other examples of our successes in 2022**

In March, we hosted our first **Love & Literacy** event at Hope Lutheran Church across the street from the Fresno HQ, using their large community room. The theme was "Reading By the Campfire," and we created literacy games and activities using the camp theme. We also involved our PRAISE KODA-time team to participate in ASL storytelling and had various booths relating to Deaf-centered services and products. One of the highlights of the event was our Reptile Show and booth as people were fascinated with the snakes, lizards, and other reptiles that were there. We had 46 children and 43 adults in attendance, and we received many positive comments about the event; our first large in-person event in two years.

In May, we hosted **Martha's Vineyard in the Central Valley**, our longtime annual event. We were able to return to having the event in-person after going online the past two years due to COVID-19 concerns. While the number was much smaller than before the pandemic, we were

able to test out a new format and layout that we will use in the future. We made the event more interactive, which the participants really enjoyed. We also expect that our attendance numbers will increase over time, as this event tends to be popular with local ASL and interpreting students. Attendees get a sense of what life was like in the 1800s and early 1900s for Deaf residents of Martha's Vineyard, during the period of their history when they had enough Deaf residents to spark a trend in hearing people learning to sign. This meant the islanders experienced more communication access and equality with their hearing peers, a fact that has been inspiring to those who love Deaf history.

In July, we hosted our **ASL Summer Program** in our Fresno Headquarters., a week filled with morning sessions consisting of themed arts & crafts, games, activities, and educational field trips, conducted all in ASL. Some activities were offered separately for parents and children, and while the children are engaged, parents participate in a parent support group to discuss concerns relating to raising Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Other activities were for the entire family, and the purpose was to foster healthy familial bonds while building on each family member's ASL and communication skills. The theme for the 2022 program was "Finding ASL in Desert Oasis."

In September, we had many **Deaf Awareness Week** events. All four of our offices collaborated to present a variety of educational and fun events for the community. The events included: ASL Games, Deaf Jeopardy & Ice Cream Social, Whose Sign Is It Anyway, LGBTQIA+ Trivia, Deaf Journey Towards Accessibility Panel, and Games & Chat. The Deaf Journey Towards Accessibility Panel was a huge success for our viewers. We received great questions and feedback from some audience members regarding Deaf panelists' challenges with accessibility in the countries where they reside. We learned how our country compared to and differed from theirs and appreciated the strides in access and challenges we continue to face as an international community. We provided ASL voice interpreters so everyone could experience access; many hearing viewers enjoyed learning more about this particular topic. We are already getting requests for another international themed panel.

In November, we hosted our 31st **Valley Deaf Festival**: "There's No Place Like DHHSC!" It was wonderful to bring back VDF in-person, after two years of needing to cancel the event due to COVID fears. Although we had approximately 700 people, half the normal attendance, we considered the event a success. We had many booths by Deaf-owned businesses, a community that loved coming together again, fun activities, and a special performer: Justin Perez with his

Visual Vernacular performance. We also had a muralist come and do a live painting to include with our raffle prizes. We knew this Valley Deaf Festival would have to “break the ice” by being the first after the COVID pandemic, and it was a great way to bring many community members back in one place. We expect next year’s event to return to normal proportions, but hopefully with increased attendance.

Our #GivingTuesday fundraiser was very successful. We had a campaign to educate our community about what we do and asked for support through donations. We raised over \$5,000, to be used toward repairs for our Fresno Headquarters’ ceiling and to make our kitchen more accessible. We are anxious to start the upgrades once we have sufficient funds, but we are grateful for every dollar donated towards these two big projects. We want our building safe and accessible for everyone who uses our building.

In December, each office hosted a holiday party for our community. The setting and format of each event varies, but generally include food and conversation, games and stuffed animals for the children, and visits from Deaf Santa. In the past, we have been able to get sponsorships for these parties, but unfortunately not in 2022 due to economic challenges. Those sponsorships tend to pay for food and gifts for children. Turnout for some offices was lower than the norm, but overall, the events were fun and entertaining. For the Fresno Headquarters, because of the larger community and higher expectations for food, we partnered with Bridge Deaf Fellowship because we serve many of the same people. They provided most of the food and the Deaf pastor signed a holiday-themed story while we provided entertainment, children’s activities, and donated stuffed animals from Mountain Bear Fan Club. We also got donated stuffed animals for each outreach office. We had 142 people for Fresno's Annual Holiday Luncheon and we were thrilled with the turnout.

### **Heartfelt Thanks**

We are full of gratitude to our primary funder, California Department of Social Services, Office of Deaf Access, for their continued support of our core services. Without CDSS, we would not be able to provide as many services as we do.

We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to funders of our grant programs for 2022: Employment Development Department, Fansler Foundation, First Five of Merced County, First

Five of Merced County, Harden Foundation, United Way of Merced County, Dollar General Literacy Foundation, and United Way of Tulare County. Our programs serving our Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members were made possible by your generous support!

We were also blessed to receive continued support from Combined Federal Campaign and Our Promise, which paid for needed supplies for events and staff development trainings for staff. We believe in continued professional development for our staff and thank you for partnering with us in making this possible. We appreciate your ongoing support!

Furthermore, we would like to thank Whole Foods Market's Community Giving Program, Educational Employees Credit Union, Heart Cruises, Valley Life Charter School, and Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (CCRID) for their sponsorships of our 31st Valley Deaf Festival: "There's No Place Like DHHSC!" They were our biggest sponsors, and we are most appreciative of their ongoing support. They partnered with us in welcoming our community members, families, and college/university students back in person!

A big thank you to Bridge Deaf Fellowship for partnering with DHHSC's HQ in hosting our Holiday Luncheon. Their leadership team provided the food for our community and we are grateful for their support! Also, we appreciated Suzanne Conway, her mother, and Mountain Bear Fan Club for the donations of stuffed animals to the outreach offices' holiday parties, Fresno HQ's Holiday Luncheon, and Valley Deaf Festival. The children were thrilled with their "stuffed friends," and we want DHHSC to feel like a second home to our community.

Thank you, as well, to our Board of Directors for their time serving on the board! Every hour of support they contribute through DHHSC's fundraising efforts and events is essential. Their financial contributions as board members also cover some of DHHSC's expenses that are not billable to CDSS.

For all of you who volunteered or donated to DHHSC in 2022, including Fresno State University students who made fundraising for DHHSC as part of their Service Learning Projects, we are so grateful for every minute of volunteer work you do for us and for every donated dollar that supports DHHSC's services and programs. Your support, whether through time, energy, or money, makes it possible for us to do what we do for the community we serve.

## **Your continued support is needed**

Thank you for giving DHHSC your support for the work we do. We are honored to be serving our community in Central California! We are committed to providing the best services possible in hopes of making a difference for our community, which we truly cherish. Every Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Late Deafened individual, as well as all of our caring supporters, continue to be important to us.

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*Your support is welcome, whether it is a donation of your time or money. If you would like to donate your time in volunteering, please visit your local DHHSC office today and ask how you can contribute.*

*If you would like to donate money online for DHHSC's services, you can easily do so at this link:*

<https://www.dhhsc.org/donations/>

*We also welcome donations in person at any of our four offices, and of course, your donations are tax-deductible!*