MARYLAND

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Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

Yvonne M. Dunkle
Director

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Yvonne M. Dunkle
Director

January 1, 2007

Dear Governor Ehrlich, President Miller, and Speaker Busch:

It is my pleasure to present the 2006 Annual Report for the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). The report highlights our activities and progress for the period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006. This year, ODHH grew in both responsibility and staff. On February 1, 2006, Governor Ehrlich appointed a new Assistant Director to the office. ODHH also received approval for a part-time, one-year contractual position, which was filled on May 24, 2006 by a Senior Staff Assistant.

After a year and a half of intense work, ODHH completed its website design. The site, launched on November 3, 2006, continues to receive positive feedback. ODHH also continued its outreach efforts to educate the public and the deaf and hard of hearing communities about the office and its programs. During the 2005 legislative session, Senate Bill 735 was enacted to create a one-year Task Force to study Visual Smoke & Evacuation Alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. ODHH was directed to both chair and staff the task force's work. The task force submitted its report to the Governor and General Assembly on September 30, 2006.

ODHH also began work on several key policy issues in 2006, including access to driver's education and mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing. The past year has marked a change in momentum at the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as we are able to better address the needs of all of Maryland's citizens and efficiently implement the three programs of ODHH. The office made tremendous progress in 2006 and will continue working to promote its mission and vision.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Dunkle

Yvonne M. Dunkle
Director

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About the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

According to statistics prepared by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM), from information obtained through the U.S. Bureau of the Census, almost 490,000 Marylanders have some degree hearing loss. Established in October 2001 to promote the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) is a coordinating agency that reports directly to the Governor's Office and works with various state and private agencies to ensure appropriate delivery of services to all of Maryland's diverse citizens. ODHH also serves as an information clearinghouse on issues affecting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

ODHH advocates for the adoption of public policies, regulations and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals while also working to improve access to communication and to existing services and programs. The Office endeavors to increase public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals and partners with State and local agencies to ensure appropriate delivery of State, local and other public services to people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Through the management of three programs, Awareness Training and Technical Assistance, Constituent Services, and Community Outreach and Education, ODHH strives to fulfill its mission and promote its vision.

The Office holds two public town hall meetings each year to receive public comments on the quality of state services and programs affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals, ODHH-related functions and operations, and any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Early in 2006, ODHH filled the staff vacancy for an Assistant Director and in May 2006, ODHH was able to add a part-time one-year contractual position. With the additional staff resources, ODHH was able to be more active than ever before, taking on new responsibilities and initiatives to improve the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

Mission

ODHH exists to provide expertise related to deaf and hard of hearing issues to Maryland citizens and to facilitate their ability to access resources and services.

Vision

ODHH believes that all Maryland citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing should have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities for participation in all aspects of community life through the provision of appropriate accommodations.

Staff of ODHH

Yvonne M. Dunkle, *Director*
Denise Gagnon Perdue, *Assistant Director*
Julie Anne Schafer, *Senior Staff Assistant*

ODHH serves and participates in the following Committees and Task Force:

- Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and its Subcommittees
- MDOD's Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities or Unique Needs Advisory Committee
- MDOT's State Highway Administration ADA Advisory Committee
- MSDE's Special Education Statewide Advisory Committee (SESAC)
- Maryland's Interagency Disability Board
- Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Council
- Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
- Baltimore County Emergency Preparedness
- Task Force to Study Visual Smoke and Evacuation Alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Awareness Training and Technical Assistance

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides awareness training, technical assistance, and consulting services to all levels of Maryland government. Awareness training aims to educate Maryland government about the diverse communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals by providing information about their specific needs. ODHH identifies the actions needed to improve accessibility and to ensure effectiveness and compliance of existing services and programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Technical assistance can include communication accessibility assessments and the review of policies, procedures and practices in comparison with effective services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Under this program, ODHH received 107 contacts from government agencies and private entities for education, technical assistance, training and information sharing on issues and concerns shared by deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Highlights

- ODHH staff worked with the MVA to review progress made with driving schools to provide accessible communication. As a result, the MVA reported that all driver's education video material is now captioned. In addition, MVA is exploring alternative accessible teaching methods such as online instruction.
- ODHH coordinated with the MVA to develop language to be incorporated into Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) 2007 State Plan. This Plan is designed to work collaboratively with all units of state government to refine steps necessary to bring services to people with disabilities, including individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- ODHH staff worked with the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Subcommittee on Mental Health to develop language to be included in the 2007 MDOD State Plan to address Mental Health issues.
- Office staff testified in favor of Senate Bill 456: Vehicle Laws – Special Dealer Registration Plates – Authorized Uses, which impacted deaf students taking driver's education course in Frederick County.
- ODHH, along with several representatives from the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Mental Health Subcommittee, began dialogue with DHMH's Mental Health Administration to address the delivery of and access to services provided by Maryland's Public Mental Health Services.
- ODHH staff developed questions related to communication access in emergency preparedness for an MDOD survey to be distributed among MEMA managers to determine their readiness for working with people with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
- The Office met with the leaders from Maryland State Fireman's Association and FABSCOM, along with MEMA, MDOD, the Office of Service and Volunteerism, and Grants Office staff to address funding needs for visual smoke detectors for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- Staff screened a training videotape, "Working with People with Disabilities: A Guide for First Responders," produced by the Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities and the Baltimore County Fire Department.
- ODHH staff testified about the shortage of interpreters and mental health service-providers for the deaf and hard of hearing at a Public Hearing on Workforce Shortage conducted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Training Sessions

- ODHH worked with a deaf consultant to provide sensitivity and awareness training to over 100 members of the hospital staff at Baltimore-Washington Medical Center.

- The Office joined with the Deaf Addictions Services at Maryland (DASAM) staff to conduct sensitivity and awareness training on HIV and AIDS in the Deaf community. The training was presented to service providers contracted with the AIDS Administration.
- The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing gave awareness and sensitivity training on communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing at a Lion's Club Social and Dinner event.

Technical Assistance

ODHH provided Technical Assistance to the following entities:

- Division of Corrections/Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
- Department of Transportation/Motor Vehicle Administration
- Department of Disabilities
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene/Mental Hygiene Administration
- Maryland State Department of Education/Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Department of Natural Resources
- Workforce Technology Center/Maryland Technology Assistance Program
- Governor's Office for Community Initiatives
- Internal Revenue Service
- University of Maryland
- Deaf Addiction Services at Maryland
- Maryland Department of Planning and Maryland Historical Trust
- Public Service Commission
- Maryland Disabilities Forum
- Annapolis City Government Office of Emergency Preparedness
- Maryland Insurance Administration
- Maryland Office of the Public Defender
- Town of Sykesville
- Department of Social Services – Prince George's County
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Developmental Disabilities Council – Maryland
- Baltimore County Fire Department
- Queen Anne's County Board Of Education

Related Policy Work

Task force to Study Visual Smoke and Evacuation Alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Senate Bill 735, introduced in 2005, required apartments and condominiums to provide visual evacuation alarms connected to the main alarm system for occupants who are deaf or hard of hearing. If passed, the bill would have required all landlords and condominium associations to retrofit their alarm systems to meet specific guidelines. As a result, many property management entities and associations expressed concern about the cost of these retrofits because a two hundred-dollar cap was placed on tenant-paid expenses. Senate Bill 735 in its original form did not pass. The bill was amended to form a task force for one year to study visual smoke and evacuation alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and are living in apartments or condominiums.

Task Force Members

From top left: Denise Gagnon Perdue, Alicia Epstein, Delegate Richard Sossi, Gordon Pickering, W. Faron Taylor, and R. Bruce Campbell. From bottom left: Dirk Albrecht, Donald Sievers, Lise Hamlin, Benjamin Dubin, JoAnne Knapp, and Yvonne Dunkle.

The amended legislation named the Director of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to chair and staff the Task Force to Study Visual Smoke and Evacuation Alarms (the Task Force) for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Task Force began its work on October 1, 2005 and presented its report and recommendations based on its yearlong study to the General Assembly on September 30, 2006.

The Task Force had the responsibility to study and make recommendations on five areas: (1) Emergency evacuation plans in the state for people who are deaf and hard of hearing and who are living in apartments and condominiums; (2) The availability of emerging technology and the costs of the technology related to the security and safety of people who are deaf and hearing; (3) The costs of installation in common areas and individual areas within apartment buildings and condominiums of alarm systems specifically designed for people who are deaf and hearing; (4) A comparison of other states' emergency evacuation plans and the costs of those plans for emergency evacuation of people who are deaf and hard of hearing and are living in apartments or condominiums; and (5) An examination of all public and private funding sources available for the purpose of providing emergency evacuation plans, devices, and equipment to people who are deaf and hard of hearing and are living in apartments or condominiums.

At the conclusion of its study, the Task Force submitted several recommendations to the General Assembly. Those recommendation were to: (1) Include visual smoke detectors and alarms, vibrating tactile devices, low/dual frequency alarms, and other emerging technology in the discussion of universal design and/or future policy discussion. (2) Establish a state fund for grants to retrofit systems for visual alarm signals. (3) Draft a policy requiring all multi-family housing to have an evacuation plan providing for the safe egress of all persons with disabilities. (4) Implement a state-wide education campaign, through the coordination of the State Fire Marshal's Office and the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to alert all people with hearing loss to become more involved in the various methods of life safety warning to determine what systems work best for them. Such systems could include strobes, vibrating tactile devices, pagers and/or low/dual frequency alerts. (5) Fund further study on emerging technology and on the effectiveness of vibrating tactile and visual alarms for sleeping deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing individuals. (6) Provide an income tax incentive through a tax credit for condominium associations and apartment owners who make their buildings accessible to deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing people. (7) Draft new legislation, utilizing the findings of the Task Force, that addresses the life safety concerns of deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing Maryland residents living in apartments and condominiums.

Transformation Work Group-Mental Health

Last year, Maryland was one of seven states, along with Texas, Washington, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Ohio and Connecticut, to be awarded a Governor's Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant (MHT SIG). Recently two more states, Hawaii and Missouri, were awarded grants. The MHT SIG is a Cooperative Agreement grant program of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA). The program is designed to promote the ambitious agenda laid out in the Final Report of President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. This MHT SIG will support an array of infrastructure and service delivery improvement activities to help grantees build a solid foundation for transforming and sustaining effective mental health and related service systems in their state. Over the next five years Maryland will receive a total $13.5 million dollars to achieve its goals.

Since August 2006, the Maryland Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has worked with the Mental Health Transformation Project and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to ensure that the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people in Maryland are included in every step of the process. To this end, ODHH gathered data to include in a proposal to significantly enhance the delivery of mental health services to our constituent base. In addition to gathering data, ODHH attended and coordinated interpreters for Work Group Meetings, encouraged the deaf and hard of hearing communities to attend public forums, and has successfully advocated for the deaf and hard of hearing communities to be represented on local subcommittees.

Constituent Services

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing serves as an information clearinghouse and referral service for the deaf and hard of hearing community to governmental departments and agencies, as well as public and private entities that provide services in Maryland.

ODHH provides advocacy work and acts as a liaison between the deaf and hard of hearing community and the General Assembly, Governor, and governmental departments and agencies in Maryland. ODHH also establishes a network through which services provided by State and federal programs can be channeled.

Highlights

ODHH received 486 requests from constituents during the 2006 calendar year. Of the 486 requests, staff answered 413 requests in less than one business day as outlined in ODHH performance goals. This is the first year ODHH has met its performance goal. In comparison to calendar years 2004 and 2005, ODHH experienced an increase in requests answered within one business day by 8.43% and 7.61% respectively.

This table reflects the statistics for the calendar year of 2006.

Total Number of Requests	Number of Individual Constituents	Number of Governmental Agency Requests	Percentage responded to in under one business day
486	379	107	85%

Website

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing announced the launch of the new ODHH website on November 3, 2006. The website will serve as a resource for the deaf and hard of hearing community as well as individuals and organizations working with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The website, located at www.odhh.md.gov, was designed by a contractor with support from ODHH staff, interns, advisory council members, and many other volunteers. The website's resources address assistive technology and hearing aids, children and youth services, services for people who are deaf-blind, education, mental health and substance abuse, sign language classes, senior citizens and aging, and numerous other topics. The website also provides an opportunity for constituents to submit requests for services and for state and private agencies to submit requests for awareness training and technical assistance. Users can also keep up with ODHH's progress by accessing Advisory Council meeting minutes, the Five-Year Strategic Plan, and Legislative Updates.

ODHH believes that all Maryland citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing should have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life through the provision of appropriate accommodations. With the launch of the website, ODHH hopes to promote its mission to provide expertise related to deaf and hard of hearing issues to Maryland citizens and to facilitate their ability to access resources and services.

Community Service Announcements

Pursuant to statutory authorization, ODHH serves as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals. On July 1, 2006, as a community service, the Office began sending out pertinent community announcements related to conferences, workshops, trainings, events and job opportunities to an extensive email distribution list developed early in the year. To date, the Office has sent over 100 such announcements. One agency commended ODHH for its service after they received more than 25 qualified candidates for a single job opening.

Community Outreach and Education

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing facilitates community outreach and education through various activities, events and meetings to promote awareness of ODHH as a state resource on issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals, as well as to strengthen communication between ODHH and stakeholder communities. Outreach and education include presentations, the provision of training workshops, and booth displays across the State of Maryland. ODHH received 28 requests to participate in outreach activities this year, in addition to ODHH initiated events.

Highlights

American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) Biennial Conference
Director Yvonne Dunkle giving the welcome speech to over 1,000 deaf-blind participants and their SSPs.

- ODHH Director gave the opening speech and, on behalf of the Governor, presented a Governor's Proclamation to the President of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind at their biennial national conference at Towson University where 1,000+ deaf-blind delegates and their support service providers (SSPs) attended workshops and exhibits. In addition to opening remarks, ODHH had an exhibit booth for three days during the conference and hosted a town hall meeting for deaf-blind constituents and their SSPs.
- ODHH participated in MDOT's Secretaries Conference on Accessible Transportation as a featured presenter and also as an exhibitor.
- ODHH staff attended the Biennial State Director's Meeting and distributed ODHH fact sheets, brochures and business cards to State Directors from 35 different states. Attendees developed a comprehensive list of "issues to be addressed" and member states voted on two issues to become key initiatives to be addressed in the next one-two years: (1) Access to communication, which includes: SSPs, all interpreter and real-time transcriber related issues, video relay issues, closed and open caption issues, and (2) Emergency preparedness standards and funding. The state directors also discussed the need for a national and state "deaf/hard of hearing" census, as every state relies on different calculations and/or reporting sources for their number of deaf and hard of hearing residents.
- The Office partnered with the National Aquarium in Baltimore for their Deaf Awareness weekends and set up an informational table to educate people about ODHH and its programs.

ODHH Initiatives

Get Out the Vote

ODHH initiated a project for a voter registration drive to promote voter education and awareness among deaf and hard of hearing constituents. The Office designed and ordered buttons that read: "I'm Deaf and I Vote!" "I'm Hard of Hearing and I Vote!" and "People with Hearing Loss Vote!" ODHH traveled around Maryland, registering voters and providing interpreted demonstrations of the new Diebold voting machines. The drive was successful, registering over 50 new voters! However, the greatest success experienced was providing hands-on, interpreted training on how to use the new voting machines to nearly 200 deaf and hard of hearing constituents, many of whom have multiple disabilities.

Brown Bag Lunch for Professionals who work in Deaf Services (BBL)

In 2006, ODHH took the first steps to revive the BBL, which historically has been a networking opportunity for professionals working in deaf services. The BBL program operates on a volunteer basis where different organizations host their own BBL. ODHH participates by managing the list-serv for the group. As part of this program, ODHH moderated a workshop called "Past, Present and Future: Maryland Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People" where representatives from various agencies gave presentations on available resources in their agencies and organizations and identified service/resource gaps that they saw within their agency and within other agencies.

Additional Highlights

- ODHH Director welcomed attendees and gave remarks during the Governor's tour of Maryland School for the Deaf-Frederick after the school received capital funding for new buildings.
- ODHH participated in and exhibited at the Maryland Association of the Deaf Biennial Symposium, helping members generate a list of issues to be addressed.
- ODHH Director gave an overview of ODHH and moderated two public forums to gather issues of concern at DeafNet's Deaf Awareness Day in Hagerstown. ODHH staff also set up an exhibit with ODHH informational materials. A total of thirty-six participants attended the two forums and more than 200 people attended the exhibits.
- The Office presented to Deaf Foundation, a group of parents of deaf and hard of hearing children in Harford County, to inform the members about ODHH and its programs.
- ODHH staffed an exhibit booth at MDOD's Inclusion Preparedness Conference. The sold out conference, with 250 registered attendees, included emergency personnel, people with disabilities, and service providers from every part of the state.
- Staff gave an overview of ODHH and its current activities and fielded questions and concerns from deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind people, parents of deaf children and advocates at Silent Social Club meeting.
- The Office staffed an exhibit booth at Potomac Chapter of Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (PCRID). More than 200 interpreters and deaf people attended the conference.
- ODHH staffed an exhibit booth at the 2006 Maryland Rehabilitation Association Conference in Ocean City.
- ODHH staff, with assistance from two members of Advisory Council, staffed an ODHH booth for two days at Baltimore County's Department of Aging "Seniors and Baby Boomers Expo."
- Staff attended the conference "Coming Together – A Call to Action: Ending Violence Against Women with Disabilities" sponsored by the House of Ruth.

Community Outreach and Education
Director Yvonne Dunkle (left) and Assistant Director Denise Gagnon Perdue (right) staff an ODHH exhibit booth at DeafNet's Deaf Awareness Day in Hagerstown.

The Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Advisory Council for the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, established in October 2001, has sixteen members appointed by the Governor. Eight members represent state agencies and eight members are from the general public. The Advisory Council's responsibilities include:

1. advising ODHH in carrying out its duties;
2. reviewing statewide activities for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
3. fostering coordination of and support for programs for the deaf and hard of hearing; and
4. studying ways to maximize the use of facilities and services available to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

The Council held four meetings this year and hosted public forums at the end of three of those meetings. The public forums are an opportunity for the ODHH staff and Advisory Council members to learn about the issues facing individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. In June, the Council formed four subcommittees, access to mental health services, education, communication access and legislative issues, to address some of these concerns. Each committee outlined its purpose and now meets to discuss methods to resolve issues it identifies.

Education Committee

Purpose: To have more communication with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. To address the education challenges faced by students who have cochlear implants. To investigate and establish a Children's Bill of Rights. To address the issue of students with a 504 plan who do not receive transition services.

Mental Health Committee

Purpose: To address both the mental health care crisis and mental health care issues.

Communication Access Committee

Purpose: To address the shortage and training of interpreters and CART transcribers. To address ADA compliance with access to communication accommodations.

Legislative Committee

Purpose: To help ODHH address upcoming legislative issues and to work on a "signature" departmental piece of legislation.

The Council also advises the office in many areas, such as web-site development, accessibility issues, and constituent services. The Council also studied the issue of access to driver's education programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and helped to facilitate a resolution of the issue with the Maryland Department of Transportation's Motor Vehicle Administration.

2006 Advisory Council Members

Benjamin J. Dubin, *Chair*
Alexis Allenback, *Vice-Chair*

Public
Vanessa Antrum
Pamela Jenkins-Dobson
Paul Farrell
Will Johnson
Julie Moyer
James Tucker/Robert Padden
Linda Webb

Private
Lindsay Dunn
Ethelette Ennis
Joshua Friedman
George Kosovich
Howard Leonard
Michelle Schaefer

Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
From top left: George Kosovich, J. Howard Leonard, William Johnson, James Tucker, Pamela Jenkins-Dobson, Ethelette Ennis, and Vanessa Antrum
From bottom left: Alexis Allenback, Yvonne Dunkle, Benjamin Dubin, and Julie Moyer.

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