

Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Core Functions Report

October-December 2025

Mission

ORS 410.740 – Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Program

ORS 410.740 creates the Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Program (ODHHS) within the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS). The program's role is to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing people across Oregon by helping the public and state agencies make services more accessible, promoting public education and equity, advising ODHS and other leaders on improving programs, and facilitating the ODHHS Advisory Committee made up of people with lived experience and knowledge of Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues.

About us

Barbara Robertson, Hard of Hearing Specialist

Barbara Robertson (she/her) grew up in and around Portland, Oregon. She has been Hard of Hearing since the age of five. Her experiences with attending mainstream public schools and with employment discrimination led her to become an advocate, and eventually to study social-political attitudes toward people with disabilities as an undergrad at University of Massachusetts at Boston and as a graduate student at University of Minnesota. She has worked with ODHHS since December 2018. She enjoys amateur radio, traveling and learning foreign languages, and home fermentation experiments. She lives in Independence and has her 104-year-old grandmother as a roommate and travel companion.

Krista Gallagher, Deaf Specialist

Krista Gallagher (she/her) is the Deaf Specialist with ODHHS and has worked for ODHS for 7 years. In Oregon, Krista has served on various boards and commissions, including as Vice Chair for City of Salem's Human Rights Commission, Co-Chair for the Oregon Health Equity Committee, and as a board member of the Disability Art and Culture Project. Krista resided in Turkey for over a decade, where she supported numerous Deaf programs, including assisting with starting a non-profit in Istanbul focused on improving educational and linguistic outcomes for Deaf children. In her free time, Krista is passionate about hiking, Muay Thai boxing, Latin dance, reading good books, and learning how to make photographs with her Afghan box camera.

Jeff Puterbaugh, Accommodations Coordinator

Jeff Puterbaugh (he/him) has lived in Oregon for approximately 40 years. He has been a state employee for over 30 years, currently with ODHS' Adults and People with Disabilities (APD) division. His hobbies include being with family and enjoying time with his grandchildren. Jeff is Late Deafened and uses Cochlear Implants.

Michael Frances, Manager of ODHHS and APD's Equity Strategy Unit

Michael (he/him, hearing) grew up in Mississippi and moved to Oregon in 2013. He has been with the state since 2016. Michael previously worked as a Child Protective Services worker and as the Equity Coordinator in Clackamas County. As Equity Coordinator, Michael led the creation of inclusive bathroom signage, founded ClackaPride, the PRIDE Employee Resource Group, and led many other equity initiatives. Michael lives in Portland with his Westie, Opal.

Shannon Neale, Office Specialist

Shannon (they/she, hearing) is the Office Specialist for ODHHS and ESU. Moving to Oregon from Northeast Ohio, Shannon obtained their Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies from Portland State University. Commitment to meaningful work led them to becoming a Supported Employment professional, where they served as a Job Coach and Program Manager in Multnomah and Clackamas Counties before locating their role within ODHS. Shannon loves gardening, watching and thinking about film, and sharing time with their rescue dog Iris.

Interpreter scheduling

ODHHS coordinates accommodations for ASL interpreters and CART (live captioning) for government agencies. Jeff Puterbaugh is the ODHHS Unit's full-time interpreter scheduler. When a Deaf community member needs an interpreter for an important appointment with a state, city, or municipal program, such as for a driver's license test, a SNAP benefits meeting, or a family visit with Child Welfare, Jeff is the person who arranges it. Jeff also schedules interpreters for trainings, events and appointments inside state agencies, helping ensure Deaf and Hard of Hearing people can fully participate. Some examples of these type of assignments would be All-Staff meetings, job interviews for prospective state employees, Community Partner meetings, and Medicaid services trainings.

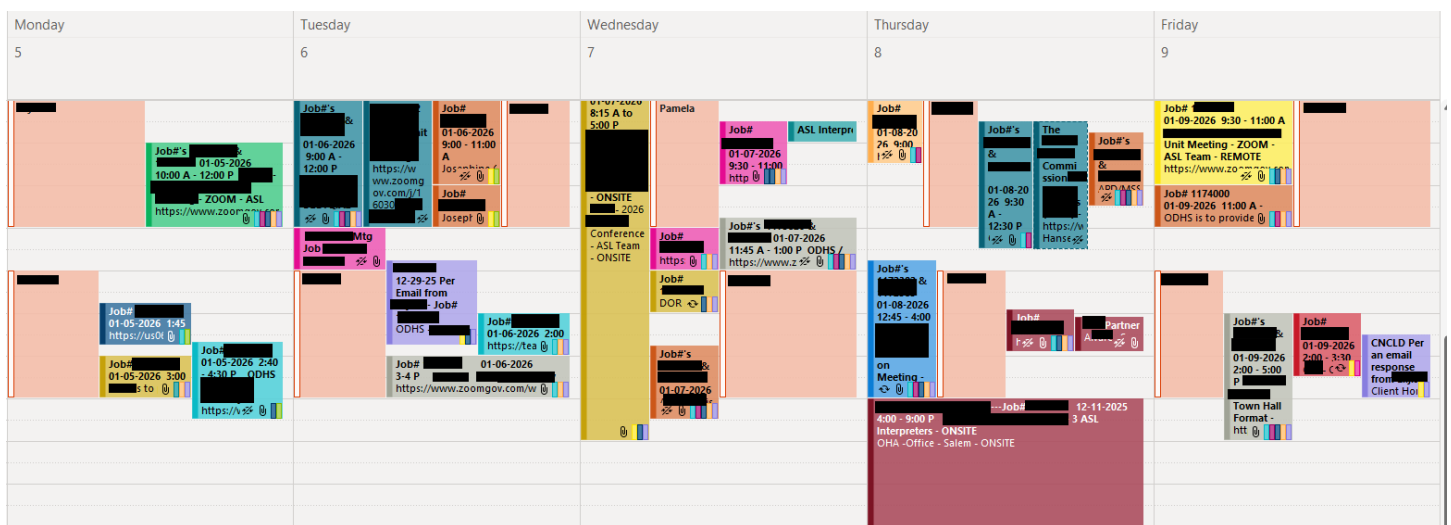
Interpreter scheduling means coordinating many details: connecting available interpreters, communicating with state agencies, confirming times and locations, and making sure everyone is prepared so the Deaf person has full access. This work often involves many emails, phone calls, and careful planning.

Data from October – December 2025

- 561: Total interpreter assignments were created
- 198: Total new requests for interpreters were received
- 265: Total number of successfully scheduled ASL/CART providers
 - This averages out to coordination of 88 assignments each month
- 135: Total number of requests ODHHS was unable to fill
 - There are numerous reasons why an assignment may be challenging to fill. This number includes requests which were made without enough time to fill an assignment; for example, a same-day request for an in-person interpreter. Additional reasons for

assignments being unable to be filled could include date changes, accommodations no longer needed, the nation-wide interpreter shortage, inability to locate a Certified Deaf Interpreter/Hearing Interpreter team, etc. When ODHHS is unable to locate interpreters, a resource list of alternative interpreter scheduling agencies is shared with the requester so they can contact other agencies to see if the assignment can be filled elsewhere.

Example of the ODHHS scheduling calendar



This is a screenshot of a random week from the last few months of the ODHHS request calendar. When requests for interpreters come through our inbox, an event is added to this calendar which serves as an assignment log. For this screenshot, names and job numbers have been blurred.

Image description: a screenshot showing Monday-Friday, with 42 multi-colored vertical rectangles with text inside them. Each rectangle represents a time duration with an associated job where interpreters and/or CART providers were scheduled to provide accommodations. Names and numbers are blurred out.

ODHHS Advisory Committee

[Click here to visit the ODHHS Advisory Committee's webpage.](#)

- [Member roster](#)

Co-Chairs

- Danica Alexander, Deaf
- John Curtis, Hard of Hearing

Members

- Jason Corning, Deaf (DeafBlind)
- Gilles de Domingo, Hard of Hearing
- Adam Logan, Hard of Hearing
- Roman Olivera, Hearing Ally

What's new?

The ODHHS Advisory Committee (AC) has newly established an Outreach Subcommittee with Krista serving as the lead staff person. Following a Town Hall event held on May 22, 2025, the Outreach Subcommittee was created on October 9, 2025, recognizing the need to attract new Committee members and continue to connect with Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities in Oregon.

- **The ODHHS Advisory Committee's Outreach Subcommittee is planning Town Halls periodically through the year.** All Advisory Committee meetings, including Town Halls, are open to the public. The next one is scheduled for **Thursday, April 23, 2026, 6-7:30 p.m.** A meeting link will be posted on the [Advisory Committee's page](#).

How to participate

The ODHHS Advisory Committee wants to meet people who are passionate about Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing matters. Members of the public are welcome to attend a regular meeting, which occur on third Thursdays from 2-4 p.m., January-May, and September-November. Subcommittee meetings are also open to the public. There is time for public comment at the beginning of all AC and Subcommittee meetings. [Click here to access meeting registration links, past meeting minutes and agendas.](#)

Interested in joining the work of the ODHHS Advisory Committee? The Committee currently has 6 open seats: 3 Deaf, 2 Hard of Hearing, and 1 Hearing Ally. Instructions on how to apply are on the Committee's webpage under the "How to Apply" header, [including this video with instructions in ASL](#). Email your completed application form and resume (if you have one) to odhhs.info@odhs.oregon.gov.

Active Subcommittees

- Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee
- Outreach Subcommittee

Emergency preparedness initiatives

Emergency preparedness and the ODHHS Advisory Committee

The ODHHS Advisory Committee has an Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee. Please see the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee section of this report for more information about how the ODHHS Advisory Committee supports inclusive emergency preparedness for Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. If this topic interests you, please consider attending subcommittee meetings (open to the public) and joining the ODHHS Advisory Committee.

Oregon Department of Emergency Management's Accessible Communications for Emergencies Workgroup

The Accessible Communications for Emergencies Workgroup (ACE) originated from ongoing conversations between ODHHS staff, ODHHS' Advisory Committee's Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee and Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) about the need to improve accessibility for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people in emergency management planning. Regional FEMA and Pacific Northwest partners participate in these meetings for broader collaboration and sharing of resources.

- Kayla Thompson, Community Preparedness Coordinator with OEM, brought in the original FEMA guidance to support this work, and recent meetings have included representation from Washington State as Oregon connects with broader regional and nationwide efforts to ensure Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Deaf communities are included in emergency planning and response.

- Barbara has had a leading role from ODHHS in helping form ACE and continues to meet regularly with Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) through ACE partnership.
- The ACE workgroup meets monthly.
- Special thanks to Eileen Marma for her ongoing contributions to this effort. Eileen participates in the ODHHS Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee as a public member after having served two terms and as Chair of the AC.

Two Weeks Ready ASL videos

With support from the ODHHS' Advisory Committee's Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee, the ODHHS team helped guide the creation of "[Two Weeks Ready](#)" emergency preparedness videos in ASL. The videos can be found by searching for "Two Weeks Ready Oregon" on YouTube.

OEM Ready Fair

In October 2025, Barbara and ODHHS Advisory Committee Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee members joined [OEM's Ready Fair](#). This was a free public event during Preparedness Month focused on helping communities get ready for emergencies. Barbara and subcommittee members tabled and showed assistive technology that can help Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people during disasters. She demonstrated an assistive listening device which helps people hear one voice clearly in a noisy place, and captioning tools which could be used in an emergency shelter to communicate important needs, like health concerns or a missing pet. The Ready Fair brings together community partners and experts to share practical resources and support Oregon's "Be 2 Weeks Ready" program.

Statewide Preparedness Plan

ODHHS recently joined the workgroup developing Oregon's Statewide Preparedness Plan led by OEM.

Mass Care Response Team

Barbara serves on the Mass Care Response Team (MCRT) and participated in a Joint ODHS and OHA Operations Center training (JDOC) in January to support coordinated emergency response efforts for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people.

Education and trainings

Oregon Eligibility Partnership training

Krista and Barbara provided Deaf and Hard of Hearing culture training for all staff at the Oregon Eligibility Partnership (OEP) in 2025. OEP supports Oregon agencies in determining eligibility for benefits like health, food, cash, and childcare programs.

Equity training for APD managers

In September, Krista and Barbara partnered with Adults and People with Disabilities (APD)'s Equity Strategy Unit to provide three training sessions for frontline supervisors on Deaf Culture and Deaf people communicating for themselves. Their training was titled "Why Representation Matters: Inclusion Over Audism." Krista shared clips from "Deaf President Now!" and discussed Deaf agency and leadership. Barbara discussed issues faced by people who lose their hearing later in life, and the serious health impacts of not addressing hearing loss. The team highlighted tools, supports, and the long-term health importance of communication access. Three sessions were offered at different

times to make the training as accessible as possible for managers and supervisors.

NorthWest Senior and Disability Services training

Krista and Barbara provided two training sessions for NorthWest Senior and Disability Services (NWSDS) focused on effective engagement and communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.

Senior Advisory Council in Southern Oregon

Barbara presented to the Senior Advisory Council in Southern Oregon. Information about assistive listening technology was shared, including hearing aids and other devices that support communication access. The presentation discussed new trends, such as over-the-counter hearing aids, assistive listening equipment, and wearable technology, and emphasized the important health benefits of using these tools.

Consultation and collaboration

State of Oregon Digital Accessibility

In October 2025, Barbara was consulted by OHA Digital Accessibility leadership working on digital accessibility policy development.

APD's Equity Review Team

Krista is a member of APD's Equity Review Team (ERT) in partnership with the APD Equity Strategy Unit. The purpose of the ERT is to make sure the potential impact of rules on diverse consumers and providers is carefully considered when writing APD rules. Krista brings both a Deaf community perspective and a data equity lens to the review of new or revised policies and procedures across APD.

Oregon State Accessible Technology Program's Advisory Council

Barbara serves on the Oregon State Accessible Technology Program's Advisory Council, convened by Access Technologies Inc. She represents APD and participates in quarterly meetings to support accessible technology efforts across the state.

Tribal Consultation with APD's Equity Strategy Unit

Laura Hunker, Tribal Affairs Consultant for APD, has attended an ODHHS' Advisory Committee meeting and invited members of the AC to attend a Tribal Navigators meeting. ODHHS has an upcoming meeting with Laura to discuss interpreter scheduling for Tribes.

Equity learning for our team

Krista leads a partnership with APD's Equity Strategy Unit to guide monthly equity learning sessions for both ESU and ODHHS Services staff. She has introduced key readings and discussions, including Audre Lorde's work on language, power, and who gets to define truth. In the December session, she facilitated learning on themes of silence, erasure, and justice.

Second Annual Data Equity Summit

Krista participated in the 2025 Data Equity Summit, a statewide event focused on how Oregon agencies collect, use, and report equity and identity-related data. The summit emphasized the importance of embedding data equity into data governance to better serve all Oregonians. Krista is especially passionate about data equity and its connection to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities. She is ODHHS's in-house expert on data equity and actively stays informed about new developments in this field. Krista partnered with the Equity Strategy Unit to debrief after the Data Equity Summit and discuss new strategies to APD's data collection systems.

BCX3

ODHHS participates in the BCX3 (Boards, Councils, Committees and Commissions) collaboration, working with other ODHS staff who support boards and commissions across the agency. This group shares best practices, problem-solves issues such as mileage and logistics, and strengthens the ability of ODHS staff to provide effective support for their advisory committees and commissions.

In progress

Interpreter rates

In the fall, Krista worked on interpreter rate analysis by gathering data on rates in comparable states and helping build the case for updating interpreter rates in Oregon.

Streamlining interpreter invoicing and scheduling processes

ODHHS is engaged in discussions with the Office of Information Services (OIS) and Business Engagement Services (BES) to explore ways of streamlining scheduling and language accommodation invoicing practices.

- ODHHS operates within a national interpreter shortage. Ensuring timely payments to providers helps maintain an active pool of interpreters.

Community and internal surveys

ODHHS would like to better understand different state agencies' trainings on language accommodation requests to better prioritize which agencies to include for trainings.

Website updates

- ODHHS is working on publishing quarterly Core Functions Reports on its website.
- ODHHS is working on improvements to the Interpreter Request Form.
- Planned website updates include clearer definitions of available accommodation services, such as what a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) does, why they may work in a team with a hearing ASL interpreter, and when a team of interpreters may be more appropriate than a single interpreter.

Keeping track of our communications

ODHHS is developing a long-term strategy for keeping Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities informed about its work. ODHHS is working on a system to better keep track of all the contacts we receive and how they're received. In the meantime, ODHHS will use its webpage to share updates, including quarterly reports on activities to make state services and programs more welcoming and accessible to Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians.

Inquiry and referral data

This section is under construction. ODHHS is working on a system to better keep track of the contacts it receives and how they're received. Currently, more Video Phone (VP) calls come into ODHHS than emails. ODHHS is passionate about coordinating and collaborating with others for the development of tracking and analyzing inquiries received.

Succession planning

ODHHS has quarterly meetings to discuss succession planning, documenting processes for each role within the unit to prepare for changes relating to

retirement, staffing shifts, etc. This planning is intended to ensure continuity of ODHHS' services to the community.

Contact us

You can learn more about ODHHS by visiting [our website](#).

- General information: odhhs.info@odhs.oregon.gov.
- [Accommodations request form](#) - use this form to request ASL/CART.
- For questions or concerns regarding language accommodations: request.odhhsp@odhs.oregon.gov

ODHHS staff

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