

**VOLUME II: HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES**

**COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND
HARD OF HEARING**

Agency Summary

Commission on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Agency Mission

To promote greater accessibility to services for the deaf and hard of hearing by developing awareness, communication access, and training programs to agencies, organizations, and businesses. To conduct an ongoing needs assessment to identify gaps and recommend changes to improve the quality of living for the deaf and hard of hearing populations in Rhode Island.

To provide statewide centralized sign language interpreter referral services, including emergency referrals. To advocate for the enactment of legislation that will promote accessibility of services. To develop a statewide coordinating council to implement the comprehensive statewide strategic plan for children who are deaf or have hearing loss. To oversee state agency compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations related to deaf and hard of hearing access issues through monitoring, training, and advocating.

To work with federal, state, and local organizations and agencies to improve the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing persons in Rhode Island. To coordinate sign language and equipment interpreter services between agencies and organizations with the goal of centralizing services.

Agency Description

Mission

The Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RICDHH) strives to promote accessibility and improve the quality of life for the deaf and hard of hearing community. The Commission focuses on raising awareness and providing communication access through training and advocacy for agencies, organizations, and businesses. RICDHH is also tasked with conducting needs assessments to identify service gaps and recommending strategies for enhancing service delivery. The Commission also advocates for legislative changes that improve accessibility and quality of life for Rhode Islanders who are deaf or hard of hearing, while ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Key Responsibilities

- Centralized Services: Provides statewide sign language interpreter services, including emergency referrals.
- Legislative Advocacy: Supports the enactment of laws that enhance access and equality for the deaf and hard of hearing community.
- Coordination and Training: Leads initiatives such as the statewide strategic plan for children with hearing loss and offers training programs to enhance communication access across various sectors.
- Compliance Oversight: Monitors state agency compliance with ADA regulations and advocates for improved services.

Statutory History

The Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was established by Law (1977-Senate Bill 882) signed by Governor J. Joseph Garrahy on May 9, 1978 after the original bill was introduced in the 1977 Legislative session. The Commission is to address the needs and concerns of Rhode Island's Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. The name of the Commission was the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired with 21 Commissioners. In 1992, the bill, House Bill 8245, was introduced on February 12, 1992 to restructure the Commission, down from 21 Commissioners to 9 Commissioners and changed from Hearing Impaired to Hard of Hearing. This bill was signed into law by Governor Bruce Sundlun on July 13, 1992. This is now known as R.I. General Laws § 23-1. Emergency and Public Communication Access Program (EPCAP) is established by Article 17 of HB 5127 signed by Governor Lincoln Chafee on July 3, 2013. It is now known as RIGL § 39-1-42(d) and § 23-1.8-4.

Budget

Commission on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

	2024 Actuals	2025 Actuals	2026 Enacted Budget	2026 Revised Budget	2027 Recommended
Expenditures by Program					
Central Management	800,168	719,767	929,154	976,952	954,081
Total Expenditures	800,168	719,767	929,154	976,952	954,081
Expenditures by Object					
Salary and Benefits	541,389	482,329	617,983	590,113	608,286
Contract Professional Services	146,874	128,698	210,700	210,700	210,700
Operating Supplies and Expenses	111,906	108,740	100,471	176,139	135,095
Subtotal: Operating	800,168	719,767	929,154	976,952	954,081
Total Expenditures	800,168	719,767	929,154	976,952	954,081
Expenditures by Source of Funds					
General Revenue	745,741	670,845	786,233	767,663	835,904
Restricted Receipts	54,428	48,922	142,921	209,289	118,177
Total Expenditures	800,168	719,767	929,154	976,952	954,081
FTE Authorization	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0

Personnel Agency Summary

Commission on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

	FY 2026		FY 2027	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified	4.0	352,946	4.0	365,541
Subtotal	4.0	352,946	4.0	365,541
Total Salaries		352,946		365,541
Benefits				
FICA		27,002		27,963
Health Benefits		73,534		78,896
Payroll Accrual		2,058		2,108
Retiree Health		11,471		11,258
Retirement		112,867		111,554
Subtotal		226,932		231,779
Total Salaries and Benefits	4.0	579,878	4.0	597,320
Cost Per FTE Position		144,970		149,330
Statewide Benefit Assessment		10,235		10,966
Payroll Costs	4.0	590,113	4.0	608,286
Purchased Services				
Clerical and Temporary Services		112,952		112,952
Other Contracts		89,248		89,248
Training and Educational Services		8,500		8,500
Subtotal		210,700		210,700
Total Personnel	4.0	800,813	4.0	818,986
Distribution by Source of Funds				
General Revenue	4.0	598,613	4.0	707,986
Restricted Receipts	0.0	202,200	0.0	111,000
Total All Funds	4.0	800,813	4.0	818,986

Personnel

Commission on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Central Management

		FY 2026		FY 2027	
		FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified					
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	0822 A	1.0	60,756	1.0	64,584
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS	0830 A	1.0	94,318	1.0	97,148
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	0832 A	1.0	101,905	1.0	104,963
PROGRAM MANAGER	0828 A	1.0	95,967	1.0	98,846
Subtotal Unclassified		4.0	352,946	4.0	365,541
Subtotal		4.0	352,946	4.0	365,541
Longevity Pay			8,724		8,986
Regular Wages			344,222		356,555
Total Salaries			352,946		365,541
Benefits					
FICA			27,002		27,963
Health Benefits			73,534		78,896
Payroll Accrual			2,058		2,108
Retiree Health			11,471		11,258
Retirement			112,867		111,554
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Performance Measures

Commission on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Central Management

Timeliness of Fulfilled Interpreter Requests

One of the Commission's legislative mandates (RIGL § 23-1.8-2(6)) is to administer the interpreter referral service. The Statewide Interpreter Referral Service locates and secures freelance interpreters for assignments requested by the paying parties (such as hospitals, civil and criminal courts, etc.) to ensure communication access is being provided. The figures below represent the percent of interpreter requests received that were partially or fully filled.

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>		<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Actual	85.90%	81.60%	87.78%	--	--

Timeliness of Information Request Response

Individuals with hearing loss, parents, businesses, and other members of the general public regularly contact the office seeking resources and information. One of the Commission's legislative mandates (RIGL § 23-1.8-2(4)) is to promote public awareness and to provide information and referral on the subject of deafness and hearing loss. The Commission aims to be Rhode Island's one-stop resource center for deafness and hearing loss-related inquiries. The figures below represent the percent of information requests that receive a response within seven business days.

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>		<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Actual	95%	95%	92%	--	--

Agency Interpreter Requests Fulfilled

The Commission is the primary provider of interpreter services for RI state government agencies. Agencies relying on this service include the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Governor's Office, and the Judiciary. The goal of the metric is to ensure that agency requests for interpreters are being fulfilled. The figures below represent the percent of state agency interpreter requests that were successfully fulfilled. [Note: This performance measure was established in FY 2024, and therefore some historical targets and actuals are not available.]

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>		<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>			
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Target	--	85%	85%	85%	85%
Actual	--	69.70%	81.73%	--	--