

Sunset Public Hearing Questions for
TENNESSEE COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING
Created by Section 71-4-2102, *Tennessee Code Annotated*
(Sunset termination June 2015)

1. Provide a brief introduction to the Council, including information about its purpose, statutory duties, staff, and administrative attachment.

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (TCDHH) was created in 1978 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The applicable statute can be found at Tennessee Code Annotated 74-4-2102. The Council is located within the Tennessee Department of Human Services under the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The Tennessee Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing exists to serve as an advocate for culturally appropriate services affecting Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind persons through coordination, public awareness, and consultation and education in areas of public service, health care, education, and employment.

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has the statutory responsibility to:

- *Advocate for services affecting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the areas of public services, health care, education, vocational rehabilitation, and employment;*
- *Act as a bureau of information for state agencies and public institutions providing health care, educational, vocational, and/or employment related services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and to local agencies and programs;*
- *Collect facts and statistics and special studies of conditions affecting the health and welfare of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in this state;*
- *Provide for a mutual exchange of ideas and information on the national, state, and local levels;*
- *Encourage and assist local governments in the development of programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;*
- *Cooperate with public and private agencies and units of local, state, and federal governments in promoting coordination in programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;*
- *Authorize the Executive Director to prepare an annual report to the Council which reviews the status of state services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Council will submit the approved report to the General Assembly and make this report available to organizations serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and*
- *Make recommendations for needed improvements and to serve as an advisory body in regard to new legislation affecting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.*

2. Provide a list of current council members, or their designees, and explain how membership complies with Section 71-4-2103, *Tennessee Code Annotated*. Please indicate each member's county of residence, race, gender and which members, if any, are 60 years of age or older. Are there any vacancies on the Council and, if so, what is being done to fill those vacancies?
 - *Refer to the membership roster which lists all information, attached.*
 - *In 2013 new legislation expanded membership from 11 to 18.*
3. How many times did the Council meet in fiscal year 2013 and to date in fiscal year 2014? How many members were present at each meeting?
 - *This can be found on the membership roster as well. The council did not meet in 2013 due to internal reorganization. As a result of the 2011 Rehabilitation Services Monitoring Report, we had to reevaluate the appropriate placement and funding source of the Council. The Council is now funded using 100% State Dollars.*
 - *The Council has met twice in 2014. 13 members were present in February 2014 and 12 members were present in May 2014.*
4. What per diem or travel reimbursement do Council members receive? How much was paid to Council members during fiscal years 2013 and to date in fiscal year 2014? Were any other expenses charged to the Council?
 - *Members of the Council receive the standard state reimbursements for their travel.*
 - *Council members are reimbursed for travel according to the Department of Finance and Administration's guidelines, which are: Mileage - \$ 0.47/mile, Lodging - \$122/night, and if lodging is needed for Council members, they will be given a stipend of \$66 for meals and incidentals. Council members have been paid in 2014 to date \$3,128.90.*
5. What were the Council's revenues (by source) and expenditures (by object) for fiscal year 2013 and to date for fiscal year 2014? Does the Council carry a fund balance and, if so, what is the total of that fund balance? If expenditures exceeded revenues, and the Council does not carry a fund balance, what was the source of the revenue for the excess expenditures?
 - *The Council neither generates money nor expends money. There is not a balance of money for the council.*
6. How does the Council ensure that its members are operating in an impartial manner and there are no conflicts of interest? If the Council operates under a formal conflict of interest policy, please attach a copy of that policy.
 - *The Council will allow the discussion of issues by the total membership; however, if one member has any conflict of interest pertaining to a particular motion, they will be required to abstain from voting on it. The Oath of Office that they signed to become an official member states that they will "perform with fidelity the duties of the office".*

We interpret that to mean they will not involve themselves in any potential conflicts of interests. The Oath of Office documentation is available for review by the Department's Office of Inspector General.

- *There is a conflict of interest agreement form signed by all members. See attached.*
7. Can the Council promulgate rules? If not, is rule-making authority needed? If rules have been promulgated, please cite the reference.
- *The Council is not a rule making entity.*
8. Is the Council subject to Sunshine law requirements (Section 8-44-101 et seq., *Tennessee Code Annotated*) for public notice of meetings, prompt and full recording of minutes, and public access to minutes? If so, what procedures does the council have for informing the public of meetings and making minutes available to the public?
- *Yes, notices of our meetings are given out at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting via e-mail to each Council member and to the center directors of the community centers for the deaf hard of hearing and deaf-blind. These individuals, in turn, can forward the announcement to their contacts to invite them to the open council meetings.*
 - *TCDHH is subject to the Sunshine Law and provides notice of its meetings by contacting the Council Members, all 6 Community Centers for the Deaf, and Library Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing regarding when and where each meeting takes place. They, in turn, distribute this information to those in their areas so that they may attend. Minutes are taken by the TCDHH Secretary at each Council Meeting and are sent out to the Council Members shortly thereafter. At each Council Meeting, printed copies of the minutes are provided for anyone that would like a copy of them. The minutes can also be obtained by contacting the TCDHH office and we can supply them via e-mail, post mail, or fax.*
9. Does the Council have a website? If so, please provide the web address. What kind of public information is provided on the site? *Address is correct.*
- *The Council has the responsibility for ensuring that state and local public programs and services are accessible to deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and Deaf-Blind citizens. The Council coordinates communication, information, public awareness, and advocacy services through six regional community service centers. The public can view the Annual State Reports, Meeting Minutes, Director's Reports, Newsletters, Contact Information and By-Laws on the website.*
 - *<http://tn.gov/humanserv/rehab/cc6.html>*
10. What were the Council's major accomplishments during fiscal year 2013 and to date for fiscal year 2014? Specifically, detail the Council's activities to carry out each of the duties described in Section 71-4-2102, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

- *The Council provided TTY and Relay training to Disability Determination Services.*
- *The Council assisted with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to propose an update to their interpreter policy.*
- *The Council assisted Walk4Hearing with raising money for hearing aids and hearing screenings for the underprivileged.*
- *The Council was active influencing suicide prevention policies and activities.*
- *The Council helped to coordinate the Emergency Awareness and Resource Services (EARS) Weather Spotting Symposium for the Deaf and distributed weather alert radios that were purchased by Metro Nashville Health Department.*
- *The Council met several times with those who are drafting a bill to create a licensing board for sign language interpreters.*
- *The Council supported WellFest which provides free general health screening mainly for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind.*

11. Section 71-4-2106, *Tennessee Code Annotated*, calls for the Council to “ensure that long range planning is conducted which shall include a description of the locations and geographic services areas for community service centers, as well as a determination of personnel needs and strategies for coordinating service providers at state and local levels.” How many community service centers for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing are operational and where are these community service centers located? Are there plans to open additional community service centers? How does the Council monitor the service centers and other community services?

- *There are currently 6 community centers for the deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing. These centers are located in Johnson City, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. There are currently no plans on funding any more centers since each center has their own region. The Council’s Executive Director monitors the contracts that the Department has with them to provide certain services. One of the initial duties of the new Executive Director of Council is long range planning for each of the centers. This is developed based on the monthly report required to be submitted by each of the centers. These reports are compiled and are open for analysis by the Council members who receive them at each Council meeting. At these Council meetings, each center representative can be asked questions and provide additional information as needed.*

12. How does the Council interact with or assist the Tennessee Regulatory Authority in the distribution of state-purchased Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs)?

- *The Executive Director serves on the TRA’s Telecommunication Distribution Access Programs Advisory Council. The Executive Director also informs citizens regarding this program who may benefit from it.*

13. What reports does the Council prepare concerning its activities, operations and accomplishments? Who receives copies of these reports? Please attach copies of any such reports issued during fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

- *The Council prepares their Annual State Report to the leaders of the House and Senate during the month of September. The report for Fiscal Year 2014 will be voted on for approval by the council during the August 8th council meeting. (Report not completed at this time)*

14. Describe any items related to the Council that require legislative attention and your proposed legislative changes.

- *Currently there are no such items.*

15. Should the Council be continued? To what extent and in what ways would the absence of the Council affect the public health, safety, or welfare?

- *The council should be continued. The Council has done great work to improve the lives of this specialized population. Currently the Council's three main focuses are: mental health for the deaf community, emergency alerting for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing communities, and licensure of sign language interpreters. The Council advocates for services affecting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the areas of public services, health care, education, vocational rehabilitation and employment. If the Council ceases the advocacy for this community will be diminished.*

16. Please list all Council programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance and, therefore are required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Include the amount of federal funding received by program/activity.

- *The Council **does not** receive any federal financial assistance.*

If the Council does receive federal assistance, please answer questions 17 through 24. If the Council does not receive federal assistance, proceed directly to question 23.

17. Does your Council prepare a Title VI plan? If yes, please provide a copy of the most recent plan.

18. Does your council have a Title VI coordinator? If yes, please provide the Title VI coordinator's name and phone number and a brief description of his/her duties. If not, provide the name and phone number of the person responsible for dealing with Title VI issues.

19. To which state or federal agency (if any) does your Council report concerning Title VI? Please describe the information your Council submits to the state or federal government and/or provide a copy of the most recent report submitted.

20. Describe your Council's actions to ensure that council staff and clients/program participants understand the requirements of Title VI.

21. Describe your Council's actions to ensure it is meeting Title VI requirements. Specifically, describe any Council monitoring or tracking activities related to Title VI, and how frequently these activities occur.

22. Please describe the Council's procedures for handling Title VI complaints. Has your Council received any Title VI-related complaints during the past two years? If yes, please describe each complaint, how each complaint was investigated, and how each complaint was resolved (or, if not yet resolved, the complaint's current status).

23. Please provide a breakdown of current Council staff by title, ethnicity, and gender.

- *Executive Director – position currently vacant.*

24. Please list all Council contracts, detailing each contractor, the services provided, the amount of the contract, and the ethnicity of the contractor/business owner.

- *\$20,000 is given to each center to provide services to the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind which stems from a law Senate Bill No. 1477 and House Bill No. 1385 that was passed in 1986.*
- *\$130,000 contract to each center to provide the following services:*
 - *Outreach and Referral; fifty (50) Service Contacts during the period of the contract*
 - *Coordination of interpreting services; two hundred (200) assignments during the period of the contract*
 - *Assistance in accessing services of community agencies; fifty (50) Service Contacts during the period of the contract*
 - *Technical assistance to employers of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and/or deaf-blind; fifty (50) Service Contacts during the period of the contract*
 - *Independent living services; fifty (50) Service Contacts during the period of the contract*
 - *Peer counseling; fifty (50) Service Contacts during the period of the contract*
 - *Workshops and seminars for sign language interpreters; twenty (20) hours of instruction during the period of the contract*
 - *Sign language and/or speech reading training; fifty (50) hours during the period of the contract*
 - *Workshops and seminars related to technology and culture of those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind; fifteen (15) hours during the period of the contract*
 - *Frontier Health-White*
 - *Knoxville Center of the Deaf-White*
 - *Partnership Services for Families Children and Adults-White*
 - *Hearing Bridges d/b/a Bridges-White*

- *Jackson Center for Independent Living-White*
- *Interpreting Services for the Deaf d/b/a DeafConnect of the Mid-South-White*