

# THE COMMUNICATOR



Phil Murphy, Governor

Sheila Oliver, Lt. Governor

Carole Johnson, Commissioner

Elizabeth Hill, Director

## Elizabeth Hill Appointed Director, NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

New Jersey Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson in March announced Elizabeth Hill as the new Director of the New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

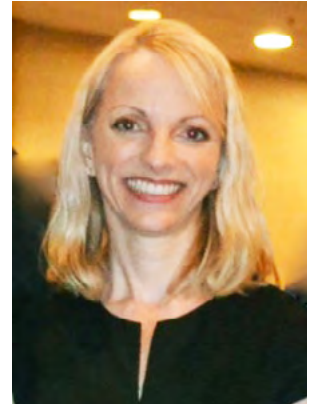
Ms. Hill is a Pennsylvania native who has nearly 20 years of experience as a direct service provider, administrator and an advocate for a better quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing children and adults.

Ms. Hill most recently worked as a school social worker at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Philadelphia. Previously, she served as Coordinator of Deaf Services with the Alabama Department of Mental Health, where she coordinated adult mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing people across a 24-county region. She initiated partnerships with multiple agencies to establish mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Ms. Hill also served as executive director of the Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In this role, she collaborated with the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs to pass a law standardizing infant hearing screenings.

As president of the Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf (PSAD), Ms. Hill oversaw development of policy initiatives that affected deaf and hard of hearing Pennsylvanians that included early intervention, education, sign language interpreting and mental health/intellectual disabilities. Governor Tom Wolf appointed her to the Governor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, where she served on the budget subcommittee. She also participated in Pennsylvania's Disability Budget Coalition. She was appointed for two terms on the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission for People with Disabilities, where she served as vice-chair of the behavioral health subcommittee and consistently advocated for the office's increased funding with the City Council. She was a member of the mental health advisory council for Disability Rights Pennsylvania.

Ms. Hill is a Board member of the National Association of the Deaf. She has also served on committees for the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and ADARA, formerly known as the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in American Government and a Master of Social Work degree from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.



Elizabeth Hill

## Spreading the Word on the Importance of Meeting the Needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumers

Did you know that DDHH staff work tirelessly to educate and train state agencies and organizations throughout New Jersey on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people?

Deaf sensitivity training focuses on Deaf culture, American Sign Language, and tips on how to communicate and interact with deaf people. Trainings on assistive technology and the communication needs of those who are hard of hearing are also offered.

DDHH strives to spread the word that the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community are important. It recently held an exciting training with Emergency Medical Technicians in Princeton on what to do when the emergency involves a deaf or hard of hearing patient. Our staff has provided trainings at senior centers, nursing facilities, schools, medical organizations, county social services agencies, and more.

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## Spreading the Word...continued

Below are some of the places that have eagerly asked for training from DDHH. If you are a deaf or hard of hearing consumer, spread the word about DDHH's training to other organizations and agencies. If you have a positive experience with staff at the below facilities, feel free to give encouraging feedback!

- Atrium Post-Acute Care of Wayne View Nursing Facility
- Summit Speech School
- Piscataway Senior Center
- Union Senior Center
- Deborah Women's Health

- Fort Lee Mayor and Advisory Council
- Monmouth University, Graduate nursing students
- Ocean County Board of Social Services
- Princeton Health and Wellness, EMS
- Monmouth County Board of Social Services
- Salem County Board of Social Services
- Bethany Senior Center
- Butler Senior Center
- Princeton EMT Training
- Reeds Rhoads Elementary School Resource Fair
- New Jersey Association of School Social Workers
- NJ Association of School Social Workers Spring Institute

## Trainings at Multiple County Board of Social Services

DDHH staff members Jaclyne Brown and Baylie Sappir have traveled throughout New Jersey to provide trainings to multiple county boards of social services. Deaf and hard of hearing consumers access county social services every day for services such as food assistance, Medicaid, and public assistance. Communication access to these services can mean the difference in the lives of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in New Jersey.

This effort was made possible by collaboration with the Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development. Division Director Natasha Johnson had this to say about DDHH's trainings: "The staff at the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are the experts on deaf and hard of hearing communication needs and I am pleased at this most recent collaboration between our divisions. The county offices of social services help many New Jersey residents enroll and apply for a number of assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food assistance, Medicaid and Work First New Jersey. That is why it is so critical for their staff to learn about communication access for New Jersey's deaf and hard of hearing residents."

Glowing reviews from various organizations include:

"The training was extremely informative. I am continuing to receive wonderful feedback from the staff. I don't recall this much excitement in our office over a training in a long time!"

"Thank you both so very much for providing such a wonderful training at the New Jersey Department of Health!"

"Thank you for putting together this presentation. The DDHH staff who came and presented did a fantastic job. It was informative and gave me a whole new perspective on the viewpoint of deaf and hard of hearing people, and re-enforced things that I, as a person who can hear need to remember to be conscious of when interacting with hearing challenges. Thanks again to you and your guests."

"Great presentation! Thanks!"

"You did an excellent job putting this training together – Absolutely FANTASTIC presentation!"

"I thought you would be interested to know that after seeing how important it is to be able to communicate, I have signed up to take a 10 week introductory ASL class given in my local town by a woman who is deaf."

**Note: Contact DDHH for a list of ASL resources in your area!**



DDHH staff member Baylie Sappir attended the Reeds Rhoads Elementary School Resource Fair, where parents of school aged children were connected to local community resources that they could utilize. Many families and educators stopped by the table for more information about resources for someone with hearing loss.

## Equipment Distribution Program Continues in its 26th Year

In 1993, the Division began this program by distributing TTY devices to eligible consumers. Since that time, the program has grown to include telecommunication and safety devices such as the amplified telephone, CapTel phones, Hearing Carry Over telephones, smoke detectors, baby cry alert systems, and Artificial Larynx Devices. New Jersey residents who have a hearing loss and whose household income is under \$45,000 are eligible to apply.

If you are interested in applying, please call **609-588-2648** or [ddhh.communications2@dhs.state.nj.us](mailto:ddhh.communications2@dhs.state.nj.us)

### Visit DDHH's Assistive Communication Device Demonstration Center Today

The DDHH operates an Assistive Communication Device Demonstration Center in its Mercerville office. The center displays assistive communication devices for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The devices on display include those in the Equipment Distribution Program (EDP) as well as other practical devices for the home and office, such as door bells, alarm clocks, videophones, amplified sound systems, and more. The division offers hands-on demonstrations.

As part of our continued outreach, we are expanding the demonstration center with new items. Did you know you can come to the center and test our devices to see which one is the best fit for you? DDHH always appreciates input as to what equipment should be on our EDP list.

Some items that we plan to demonstrate include:

1. **Summer Infant Babble Band Wearable Audio Monitor** - a watch band device that alerts parents when the baby is crying.
2. **iLuv Smartshaker 2 Portable Travel Bed Shaker** - alarm clock.
3. **SadoTech Portable Vibrating Flashing Doorbell** with a receiver.
4. **The HomeAware Starter Kit+** - with built-in smoke/CO listener, doorbell, and bed shaker.
5. **Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA-360 Clock/Receiver** – Helpful for those who deep sleep.
6. **Vibrating Alarm Clock from Bellman & Symfon**

To schedule an appointment, call the office at 609-588-2648, 609-503-4862 videophone, or send an e-mail to [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/staff/email](mailto:www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/staff/email).



*New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal hosts a Community Listening Session to discuss the AG's "Use of Force Project" and related issues. Sign Language Interpreter Donna Ellis provides communication access to attendees.*

### Presentations Offered by DDHH

If your agency, office, or company would like a free presentation on Deaf Sensitivity, Assistive Listening Devices, or other topics related to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, contact the division at 609-588-2648, 609-503-4862 videophone, or send an email to: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/staff/email](mailto:www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/staff/email).



*DDHH Advisory Council Guest Speaker Daniel J. Trolaro, MS, Assistant Executive Director, Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ gives presentation during the April meeting.*



## Mental Health Awareness and Services

May is also Mental Health Awareness Month! Taking care of one's mental health is just as important as taking care of one's physical health. If you experience depression or anxiety, consider checking in with a mental health professional in the same way you might get your high blood pressure treated.

Deaf and hard of hearing people have unique communication needs and this can make it challenging to access mental health services. Culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible services are critical to accurate diagnosis and treatment.

ACCESS Behavioral Health Services of St. Joseph's University Medical Center provides services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. ACCESS is a community service provider that offers outpatient therapy services to this population. Services are provided directly by licensed social workers who have expertise in working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including: fluency in American Sign Language; knowledge about the challenges in diagnosis and treatment of deaf individuals; sensitivity to Deaf culture; and issues related to hearing loss. Call ACCESS at 973-754-5595 or via videophone at 973-968-6554.

For more feedback on the need of mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing community, please contact DDHH at 609-588-2648, 609-503-4862 videophone, or send an email to [ddhh.communications2@dhs.state.nj.us](mailto:ddhh.communications2@dhs.state.nj.us).



## Better Hearing and Speech Month

Did you know that May is Better Hearing and Speech Month (BHSM)? The purpose of BHSM is to raise awareness about deafness and hearing loss as a rising global health issue ([www.agbell.org/Better-Hearing-and-Speech-Month](http://www.agbell.org/Better-Hearing-and-Speech-Month)). In recognition of BHSM and to promote awareness, please help DDHH to spread the word about our Hearing Aid Project. Access to hearing aids, just like access to glasses for vision needs, is critical for many people.

DDHH's Hearing Aid Project provides free refurbished hearing aids to those who are 65 years of age or older and meet income eligibility requirements. DDHH is proud of our efforts to make hearing aids accessible for those who cannot afford to purchase them on their own.



## Come One, Come All to DDHH's Advisory Council Meeting

Meet the new DDHH Director, Ms. Elizabeth Hill

Friday, July 26, 2019 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

East Brunswick Public Library, 2 Jean Walling, Civic Center Dr., East Brunswick, NJ

Guest Speakers – Easterseals and Bridges to Employment

Easterseals and Bridges to Employment, under a grant funded by the Department of Labor, provide job readiness, job placement, job coaching, vocational evaluations, assistive technology demonstrations, and pre-employment transition services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing starting at age 14.

Everyone is welcome to attend. Sign Language Interpreters, Communication Access Realtime Translation Services, and Assistive Listening Devices will be provided.

**DDHH Office Hours:** Monday – Friday: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

**DDHH Office Closed:** Memorial Day – Monday, May 27  
Independence Day – Thursday, July 4  
Labor Day – Monday, September 2

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

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