



Vermont Association of the Deaf

Senate Appropriations 4/16/2019

With closing of VCDHH (Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - a nonprofit with several programs under the umbrella of the agency) Vermont lost its most visible and available resource for the entire Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community. It is clear that on state level that there needs to be someone overseeing coordination of services and resources in order to maximize impact and leverage resources across state agencies, as well as state community providers and associations. We believe the establishment of a position to coordinate these services with **a single point of entry can begin to address the needs of the Deaf community in Vermont**

The DHHDB Advisory Council's primary recommendation is related to the critical need for a single point of entry for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind, in order to implement transformational change across all age groups.

Legislation was introduced last year (S.162) and amended by the Senate Committee on Government Operation to establish a position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director within the Department for the purpose of coordinating services within the Agencies of Human Services and of Education for children, youth, and adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and for their families.

This position will work towards ensuring:

- Coordination of available services and resources
- Expansion of professional capacity
- Data Collection, and tracking
- Accessibility (Language, community, equipment) and Affordability
- Outreach and Public education and advocacy
- Psychosocial and Emotional support
- Work to ensure that staff have latest information on technology, equipment, and issues
- Incorporate best practice to AHS service delivery
- Administrative, planning and policy development involving the coordination, expansion, and development of all Agency services
- Follow four key practices: customer service, holistic service, strengths-based relationships and results orientation

The legislation calls for a shared position between AHS and AOE and DAIL at the cost of \$89,347.00 in FY 2020 for the purpose of establishing the position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 1603.

Please support our community, and vote yes on approving the funding for this position in the FY 2020 budget.

Sincerely,

Keri Darling, President, VT Association of the Deaf



Supported by: Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (VCDR)

From VCDR 2019 Legislative Priorities:

Pass legislation that creates and funds an AHS Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind Services Director position within the Agency of Human Services with a single point of entry as recommended by the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind Council (DHHDB) to coordinate services and identify gaps and strengths. The position will cost \$89,347 and will be responsible for coordinating services within the Agency of Human Services, including creating and administering a referral network for services as well as the services recommended by the DHHDB Council and to identify system gaps.

The coordinator must have thorough knowledge of the differing needs, issues, and attitudes among the culturally deaf, the hard of hearing, the late deafened, and the deaf blind communities and have the Ability to communicate proficiently with deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf blind persons by using a variety of forms of communication.

Vermont Deaf / Hard of Hearing Community

by Carlisle Robinson

In 1904, the Austine School for the Deaf was established in Brattleboro, VT.

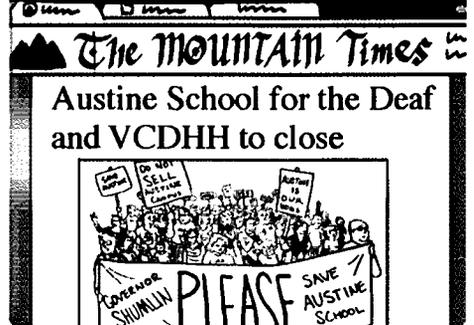
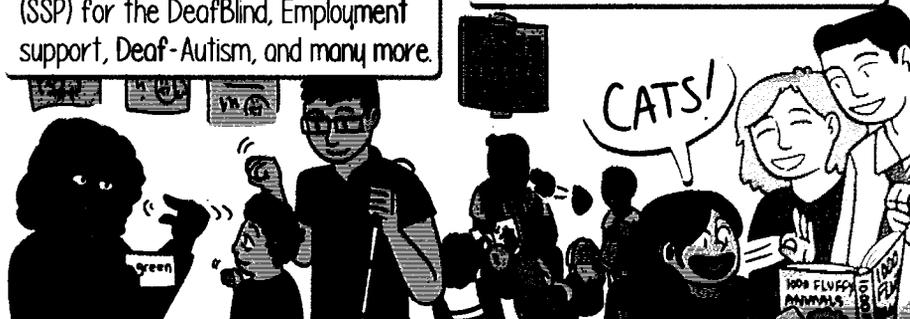
For 100 plus years, it was home to many Deaf Vermonters, and neighboring state students as well.

Then, the Vermont Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VCDHH) opened at the Austine School. They provided nearly 20 different services:

Interpreting Referral Service, Education Resources, Mental Health Counseling, Support Service Program (SSP) for the DeafBlind, Employment support, Deaf-Autism, and many more.

Many families like mine used their programs and support. I was able to grow into a confident Deaf person.

But, due to lack of funding and support, this ended in 2014.



The Deaf community was devastated. Many were left jobless and without essential services. Several had to move out of VT.

They didn't realize how important the deaf schools are. They ARE our community hub.

Today, five years later, the Deaf community in VT is rebuilding. But we still lack a much needed single centralized Deaf service / community center.

I now have to pay out of my pocket to get SSP so I can do grocery shopping, banking, etc.

After all, based on statistics, there are potentially between 62,000 to 125,000 Vermonters of all ages experiencing some degree of hearing loss.*

*2019 Report of the VT Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council