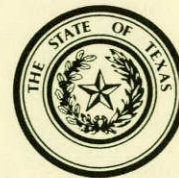


# Guide Post



...A publication of the Texas Commission for the Deaf  
March/April 1984

## Sunset Advisory Commission makes recommendations

The Sunset Advisory Commission has completed an in-depth review of the Texas Commission for the Deaf

(TCD) activities, administration and service programs. From this review, they have developed recommended changes which were presented to the TCD for consideration and response.

### Deafness in Children Addressed at Conference

More than 150 people attended the **First Annual Hightower Conference on Deafness in Children**, held March 23-24 at the University of Texas at El Paso. The conference was organized and promoted by Betty Broecker, Executive Director of the El Paso Center of the Deaf.

Conference participants were told in the keynote address, delivered by Dr. McCay Vernon, a psychologist who has attained international prominence as a writer, researcher and documentary film producer on the psychological aspects of deafness, that "it is important to deal with the realities of deafness from the beginning."

Dr. Vernon emphasized that the deaf child will never hear, never be able to speak normally and never be able to lipread perfectly. He said that, in the past, misinformation about deafness in children often carried over into the adult years, affecting the life of the deaf individual.

Frustration experienced by deaf children from an inability to communicate with their parents was explained by a panel of five deaf adults during the conference. Panel members shared personal and educational experiences from growing up deaf and discussed differences between oral schools, public schools and state schools for the deaf.

Workshops held during the conference included a discussion led by Fred R. Tammen, Executive Director of the Texas Commission for the Deaf (TCD). Additional participants included representatives from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC). Topics such as dealing with equality issues, effective use of hearing aids, and consumer information on telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDDs) were also discussed.

TCD Commissioners discussed the recommended changes at a March 10 Commission meeting and expressed their position on each of the issues in the report. The recommendations were examined to see if they would result in improved services to deaf and hearing impaired Texans and if they would have a positive impact on the efficiency of the TCD as a whole.

Below are six major recommendations raised by the Sunset Advisory Commission and the responses of TCD Commissioners.

### Maintenance of the Commission with Modifications

1. **The statute should be amended to require that the Commission composition reflect representation of the major geographic areas of the state.**

The board composition does not reflect an equitable geographical distribution. The statute should be changed to provide a better balance.

#### Response of TCD Commissioners:

*The Commissioners feel that this recommendation would contribute little, if anything, to the improvement of services to deaf and hearing impaired Texans. It is felt that if Commissioners were appointed on a geographic basis, there would be considerable inequity in representation of deaf people, because the majority of deaf persons are centered in and around metropolitan areas. Furthermore, it should be noted that since the Governor currently has the power of appointment, he can select individuals from whatever areas of the state he feels is appropriate.*

2. **The statute should be amended to require that the Governor appoint the Commission chair.**

Currently the Commission chair is elected from the

Continued - page 2

# Sunset

from page 1

membership. The general practice is for the governor to appoint. There is no reason that the general practice should not be followed here.

## *Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*The members of the Texas Commission for the Deaf oppose this recommendation with the feeling that election of the Chairman by the Commission itself is a more appropriate way of selecting the Chair. This type of selection assures continuity, and it helps assure that a qualified individual and one most respected for his demonstrated leadership abilities will be elected by his peers. If the statute were changed, the Governor could appoint a new member to the Commission, and then immediately designate that individual as Chairman. This would have the potential of allowing members who have little or no knowledge of the workings of the Commission or the needs of deaf people to be Chair of the Commission.*

- 3. The statute should be amended to require the Commission's Technical Advisory Council for Planning and Operations be abolished and its duties transferred to the Council on Disabilities.**

The above-named advisory council's duties can be carried out by the newly-created Council on Disabilities (68th Legislature). The statute should be amended to eliminate the agency's advisory council and integrate its responsibilities into the Council on Disabilities. The Council on Disabilities' membership should be modified to facilitate the assumption of these responsibilities.

## *Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*The Technical Advisory Council for Planning and Operations has been an inactive function of the Texas Commission for the Deaf for many months. The council's purpose is to serve as an interagency planning council for the coordination of services to the deaf. However, the heads of member agencies rarely attended and the designees that were sent could not make decisions having agency-wide consequences. Therefore, the Commissioners agree that the planning council should be abolished, and its duties transferred to the newly-created Council on Disabilities, which will undertake an active role in the discussion and planning of services.*

- 4. The statute should be amended to provide authority for the agency to collect fees.**

The agency currently collects fees for interpreter training. It has no statutory authority to make such collections. The fees are appropriate and the statute

## Unemployed veterans to benefit from program

Governor Mark White recently announced a new job training program to assist unemployed veterans, including veterans who have lost their hearing. Veterans of the Korean conflict or Vietnam era are eligible for the Veteran's Job Training Program.

The program offers up to \$10,000 to Texas businesses who hire and train unemployed veterans.

To be eligible for the program, veterans must have served between June 27, 1950 and January 31, 1955 (Korean conflict) or between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975 (Vietnam era). Veterans must be unemployed at the time of application and have been unemployed for 15 of the last 20 weeks.

Texas businesses or veterans interested in the program should contact the Veteran's Administration (VA), local office of the Texas Employment Commission (TEC) or county VA offices for additional information.

Information is also available from the Governor's Office at 512/475-6156.

should be amended to give the agency this authority.

## *Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*The Commissioners agree that since the TCD currently collects fees for interpreter training, the authority should be written into the TCD enabling statute.*

- 5. The statute should be amended to require more competition in the process the agency uses to award council for the deaf contracts.**

The agency currently restricts its contracting for certain services to local councils for the deaf. There are other entities which could also provide these services. The agency should request proposals from all available service providers and award the contracts on a competitive basis.

## *Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*Currently, the Commission contracts out the majority of its direct services to non-profit community-based organizations which are known to deaf people and with which they associate. There is a concern on the part of the Commissioners that open bidding may result in services being provided by an organization which is not familiar to the deaf community. Consequently, some deaf individuals in need of services would be reluctant to seek such*

**Continued - page 8**

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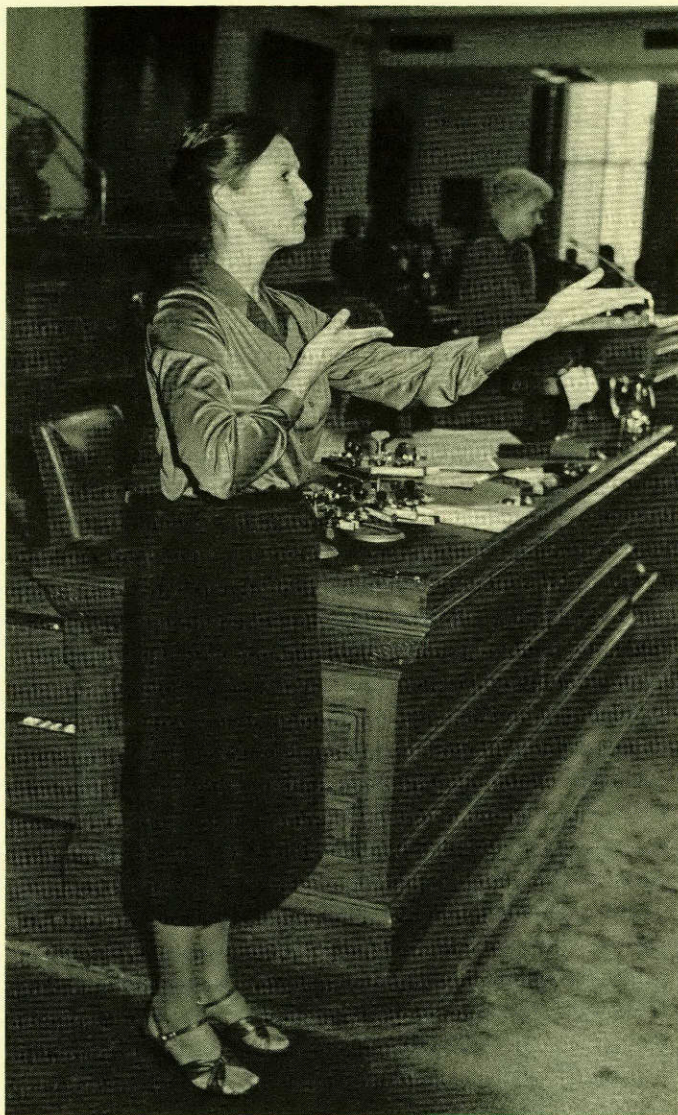
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# Sign language interpreting a vital service to deaf and hearing impaired Texans



Interpreter Rita DeVries provides sign language interpreting of a legislative session at the Texas State Capitol.

## *Directory updated*

A new **Directory of Interpreters for the Deaf in Texas** is being published and will be distributed statewide within the next few months.

**O**ne major service provided for deaf and hearing impaired persons by the Texas Commission for the Deaf (TCD) is interpreter service. Through the local councils for the deaf, an average 1,000 hours of interpreting is provided for deaf and hearing impaired clients every month. The quality of these services depends largely on the professional interpreters.

Sign language interpreters serve a vital function for the deaf and hearing impaired Texans who use them. Without interpreters, it would be difficult for many deaf and hearing impaired citizens to communicate effectively.

"I enjoy my profession. I feel like I'm supporting the deaf and doing something important in the world," says Elizabeth Escandon, an interpreter in the El Paso area.

Austin-area interpreter Mary Elmore says of interpreting, "I love it! I enjoy the deaf people in Austin and have known many of them for years. Freelance interpreting is the best job I have ever had. It's a challenge at times, but it's fun."

However, being an interpreter is not without disadvantages. Elmore says that one disadvantage of interpreting is that it is not a regular eight-to-five job. "You don't have the financial security of regular monthly paychecks or benefits like insurance, vacations or sick leave," she adds.

Interpreters are also not paid for the travel time and expense it takes to get a job. Elmore says this can quickly add up if the available jobs are across town. However, many interpreters list their largest complaint as the image the hearing community has of them.

"There's a lot of misconceptions about interpreters due to a lack of understanding and information. Some people think an interpreter is a friend of the deaf person or someone who just tags along. They assume that you know the deaf person personally and may even ask you about the kinds of medicine they take," Escandon said.

Donna Morgan, Director of Social Services at St. David's Hospital in Austin, uses interpreters to communicate with deaf patients. "Sometimes it's hard not to think of the interpreter as a family member, friend or neighbor," she says. "It becomes hard not to involve them, but that's not their role. It's hard to remember that they are just there to communicate."

"Interpreters need to be looked upon as professionals. Sometimes I ask myself, what clothes could I wear to prove to you I'm a professional? Lawyers have their suits. Doctors have their white coats. What will it take for me?" asks Austin interpreter LeWana Clark.

Interpreters were told at the 1983 national

*Continued—page 7*

# THE SCHEIN INTER

## *A professor of deafness rehabilitation sh*

Deaf men and women earn only about 75 percent of the national earnings average and this figure is declining. Moreover, deaf unemployment has been increasing since the early 1970's.

These facts come from Dr. Jerome Schein, a professor of deafness rehabilitation and the director of the Deafness Research and Training Center at New York University.

In a special interview with **Guide Post**, Dr. Schein answers questions about deafness research, state commissions on deafness and the high number of deaf males over females.

**Q** Dr. Schein, was your first encounter with deafness in 1960 when you joined the faculty of Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C.?

**A** I had no professional interest in deafness before 1960 when I joined the faculty at Gallaudet.

**Q** Currently, you are a professor of deafness rehabilitation and the director of the Deafness Research and Training Center at New York University. What are some recent findings in deafness research?

**A** One of the areas in the last few years that has been of particular interest to me has been the deaf-blind population. We must recognize that as technology allows us to keep more and more people alive, the population grows older. And, as we have natural declines in vision and hearing that accompany age, we're going to have greater numbers of deaf-blind people. There are between 800,000 and 900,000 people in the United States who are deaf-blind or who are severely visually impaired with severe hearing losses. Texas is the only state that has any kind of com-

prehensive program and services for deaf-blind people. However, New Jersey will be a serious contender with Texas for top honors in services to the deaf-blind if it continues to expand its services as rapidly as it already has. But, in the remaining states there is very little attention being given to them.

Some of the most interesting research that we have participated in is being conducted to promote a better understanding of signs and sign language. Two members of the Research and Training Center went to a major school for deaf children that traditionally, over the years, has used sign language in instruction.

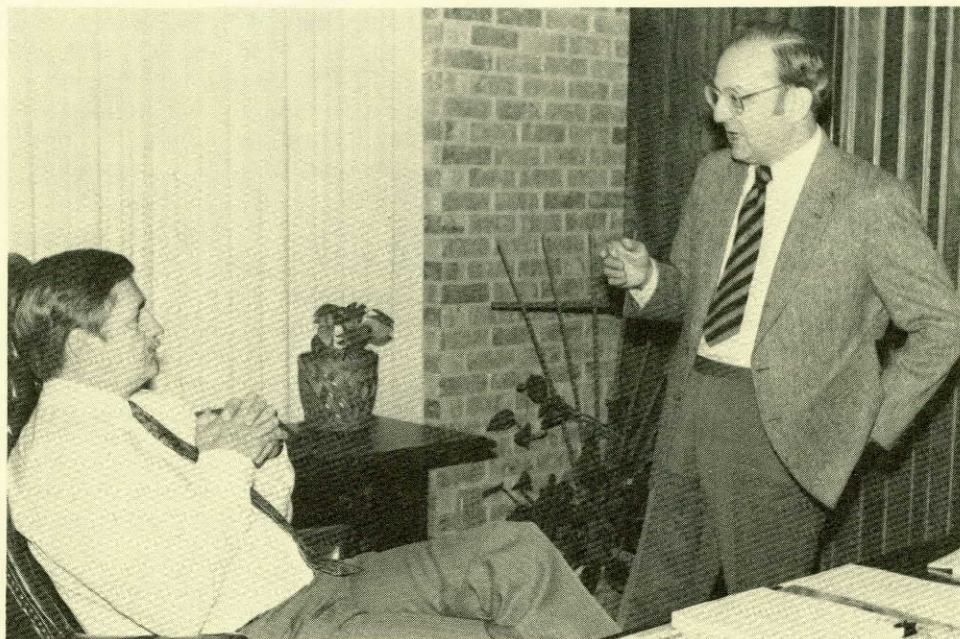
They used television cameras and tape recorders to tape the teachers during classes. Later, they split the audio portion of the tape from the visual portion and transcribed the two parts. Deaf people carefully read the video portion of the tape to see what was being signed, and this was compared to the audio tape of what the teachers were saying. This research explains why we have deaf English—it's because that's what we teach deaf children. What the deaf child is seeing is the very English they are accused of using, in which the articles have been dropped out, the modals are not used and the subjunctive is not present. With this research we gain a little better insight into the need to teach English. We can't keep showing students one thing and then demand something else. We hope to look more into the use of computer instruction of deaf children. It's something we consider very important because of the computer's potential for providing almost endless instruction requiring great repetition and language drills. Human beings, on the other hand, have low tolerances for repetitive activities.

We think computers can do a great job and would like to see more done in that area.

The newest thing we're working on is the cochlear implant—a much misunderstood prosthesis. The real question is whether or not cochlear implants are effective or useful. There are fewer than 100 children in the world who have been implanted, to our knowledge. This is an area in which there is some promise, and I don't think we can afford to turn our backs on it. Right now I am working with a four-year-old girl who was simply beyond assistance from any hearing-aid because her ear destruction was massive. She was completely mute and somewhat of a behavior problem. Notice the past tense. She received a cochlear implant and four months later her behavior changed dramatically. She has begun to develop some useful skills. This has not solved all our problems, but we're beginning to see some signs of improvement that we typically don't see in profoundly hearing impaired children. We don't know the answers to thousands of questions about bio-compatibility, and we don't even know, really, what she's receiving. She is still profoundly hearing impaired. She's clearly not getting a speech signal, but whatever she is getting is making a dramatic difference in her behavior. Now it's difficult for me to walk away from things like that. There is, by the way, no controversy about cochlear implants in adults. There are, throughout the world, close to 1,000 adults with cochlear implants. Many of their original problems have either been resolved, or have turned out not to be problems. The cochlear implant appears to have limited usefulness—usefulness for a select group of profoundly hearing impaired individuals, but it does have usefulness.

**Q** Have you conducted recent studies of prevalence and incidence rates of deafness in Texas and can you share some statistics with us?

## shares recent findings in deafness research



**Dr. Jerome Schein, director of the Deaf Research and Training Center at New York University, (right) and Fred Tammen, Executive Director of the Texas Commission for the Deaf (left) discuss recent findings in deafness research.**

**A** We just finished a study for the state of California, but not a study specifically of Texas. We have not had any luck in getting the Federal Government to finance a national study, and it's been 12-13 years since the last study was conducted. We don't have trend data, nor do we have any reason to believe that the figures that were accurate for 1971-1972 are still accurate in 1984. Nothing else has remained the same in this country, and there's no reason to believe that conditions for deaf people are exactly what they were a decade ago.

**Q** How do the earnings of employed deaf adults compare to the earnings of the general population in the 1980s?

**A** We did do one study—a five-year follow-up of a sample of the deaf people who were in the 1971-1972 survey, and we focused on their earnings. When we studied earnings in 1971, we learned that deaf men and women earn about three-fourths of the national average. But, five years later, when we compared the earnings of the average deaf person to the average person in the general public, the results were startling. Employed deaf males' earnings fell from 75 percent to 70 percent of the national average for males. Deaf females' earnings, however, plummeted from 75 percent to 59 percent of the national average for females. That's a tremendous decline in income. What this told us was that disabled people can get along fairly well when economic conditions are good, but when economic conditions tighten, they are disproportionately hit. I think that

needs to be in the forefront of everyone's consciousness.

**Q** Is the rate of unemployment higher among the deaf population than that among the general population?

**A** It's going up and, again, we're talking about relative rates. If we looked at an overall picture of the economic position of the deaf community, we would find that they were doing marvelously in the 1940s. That was during the war and it was very easy to get jobs. Anyone who was able to work had employment.

Toward the end of the 1940s the defense plants closed and conditions worsened. During the 1950s, conditions got pretty bad for deaf people.

They improved considerably toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. But then we had the "stagflation." Our figures indicate that deaf employment declined in relative proportion to the general population. I would like to have more data, but from the information we have available deaf people are not doing well, relatively.

**Q** In 1982, you said that random sampling of the deaf population shows that deafness tends to favor males. There are about 12 percent more deaf males than females. Can you explain why?

**A** Well, deafness is not a uniform condition. It's the result of many factors. What you see when you see

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# Interview

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this excess of males is, basically, two factors. One, genetics: There are syndromes in which deafness is passed down from the male adult members of the family, and not the females. So we see some excess due to genetic factors. Secondly, there's a question of response to disease. As in many other things, the female of the species is just tougher, and that's all there is to it. The female seems to be more resistant to all kinds of things. So, there's a difference in genetics, and a difference in terms of response to disease between the two sexes. And, we find that deafness is not the only condition in which this occurs. There is an excess of deafness in males when deafness occurs early in life. But, if you wait long enough and look at elderly populations, you find that deafness in females catches up. It catches up because females tend to live longer than males.

**Q How many state government agencies serving the deaf population are in existence today?**

**A** Eighteen states have commissions on deafness. Some states have advisory committees to the Governor, but I don't consider those in the same category with commissions on deafness. A commission is legislatively-based and there are provisions for financing it because of a

specific mandate to serve deaf and hearing impaired people. Texas has the first such commission in the United States. TCD is also the largest commission on deafness in terms of budget, and has one of the broadest mandates to serve the deaf population of any of the states.

**Q How can the state agencies serving the deaf receive a continuous flow of information about deafness?**

**A** Work hard. We are in the era of the information explosion. With all of the knowledge being spewed forth by the media, and with the computer-based data facilities, we're in danger of having so much information that we can't seem to get information on anything. It's very frustrating for most people to try to get simple answers to questions. From the standpoint of keeping your constituency informed, you're doing the right thing: putting out a newsletter and keeping readers up-to-date.

At the Commission's request, Dr. Schein visited the Texas Commission for the Deaf (TCD) in January to meet with the Executive Director and all program coordinators. He performed a brief review of programs and operations, comparing TCD to other state commissions on deafness.

## Club to pay for captioned TV

A new club for the deaf is collecting membership dues and contributions to pay for captioned television.

The CAPTION CLUB, created by the National Captioning Institute (NCI) in October 1983, gained 1,742 members and more than \$55,000 during its first three months of operation. The money will be used to pay for the captioning of more television programs beginning in September.

A major effort of the CAPTION CLUB is to attract matching grants from corporations, foundations and networks before September, and channel all money toward new captioned programs in the 1984-85 television season.

According to the NCI, 13 members across the country made substantial gifts to the CLUB. Three of these 13 members reside in Texas: the Austin Sign Language School, Austin; Elizabeth Partin Sloan, Garland; and William F. Wallace, Jr., Corpus Christi.

For information about membership in the CAPTION CLUB, contact NCI, c/o Public Relations Department, 5203 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041. Programs selected for captioning using CLUB funds will reflect viewers' preferences.

# Deaf recognized in national decade of disabled persons

Deaf persons are among the disabled who will receive special recognition as a result of a proclamation made by President Ronald Reagan. The years 1983-1992 have been proclaimed the **National Decade of Disabled Persons**.

Reagan says that vast new insights have been gained into the importance of education, rehabilita-

tion and employment in the lives of the disabled. According to the president, our progress is a tribute to:

- 1) the courage and determination of our disabled people;
- 2) innovative research and development in technology and training techniques to assist the disabled; and

- 3) those in public and private sectors who have given of their time and energy to help enrich the lives of disabled persons.

During this decade, the president encourages rehabilitation and services geared to helping the disabled attain independence and dignity.

# Sign language interpreting

from page 3

convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) to unite, organize and work to advance conditions for their profession. The advice came from Dr. Frank Bowe of FBA, Inc.—a management consulting firm. Bowe, the first chief executive officer of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities and author of a dozen books on disability, said that interpreters deserve credit for confronting head-on difficult issues like ethics, professional conduct and their roles in medical, legal and educational situations. He also said that the number of certified interpreters is growing fast.

"In businesses and on campuses nationwide, there's a new willingness to hire deaf people. But there's a very large knowledge gap. You can bridge that gap," he added.

Although organizations vary greatly in the number of times per month they employ interpreters, interpreters are becoming more visible in the business community.

Donna Morgan says St. David's Hospital sometimes employs an interpreter only once a month.

In contrast, Motorola, Inc. in Austin employs a number of deaf persons so they use hundreds of interpreters a year. Cheryl Denny, who is in charge of contracting interpreters for Motorola, said they averaged over 35 interpreters per month in 1983. Since it is mandatory to have interpreters present at employee meetings, they are essential to the company. Denny said the idea of hiring a full-time interpreter at Motorola had been brought up many times, but "shot down because, often, more than one interpreter is needed in more than one place."

According to one deaf consumer, interpreters can benefit a business in many ways besides providing communication with deaf employees. Rosemary Stapp, Data Entry Operator III for the Comptroller of Public Accounts in Austin, believes that deaf persons would shop or conduct business with businesses offering interpreter service for deaf customers.

"I am sure that many deaf consumers would go to businesses where they know interpreters are employed full-time," says Stapp. "It

makes me happy to see a person who can sign because it saves the time of writing back and forth. I especially feel that full-time interpreters should be employed at hospitals and other emergency centers."

It is estimated that by the year 1990, two million deaf and hearing impaired people will be living in Texas, representing a sizeable percentage of the consumer market.

To meet the communication needs of a growing deaf and hearing impaired population, the Texas Commission for the Deaf (TCD) offers a program to evaluate and certify interpreters, and publishes a directory of interpreters in Texas.

With the help of an advisory committee, TCD works with colleges and universities to develop guidelines for interpreter training.

TCD also conducts intensive, one- or two-day workshops to improve the skills of interpreters. Workshops may cover many topics, including interpreting in medical, legal and educational situations.

Interpreter LeWana Clark says, "TCD provides a super interpreter development program which involves training as well as other aspects. In the past, the workshops have been held on a statewide level with a lot of people coming in from all over."

The Commission certifies interpreters after their sign language skills have been tested and evaluated. TCD's Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI), consisting of two deaf and three hearing interpreters, tests and evaluates interpreters at five levels of skill. The BEI then recommends them to the Commission for appropriate certification.

Courts, police stations, hospitals, government agencies and interested persons employing interpreters benefit from a statewide directory of certified and non-certified interpreters published by the Commission. The directory explains the skill levels of interpreting, how to obtain an interpreter, the Code of Ethics and the recommended fees for interpreters at various levels of skill.

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## Hearings on issues of the deaf draw public participation

Public hearings were held during the month of March to hear the opinions of deaf and hearing impaired persons, professionals who work with the deaf and other interested individuals.

Input received during the hearings is being used by the Texas Commission for the Deaf (TCD) to help determine priority recommendations for the upcoming session of the Texas Legislature. An important goal of the hearings was to encourage the input of deaf and hearing impaired persons and give them the opportunity to affect the outcome of decisions that directly affect their lives.

Hearings were held March 10 in the TCD Commissioner's Board Room in Austin, March 17 at the Deaf Action Center in Dallas and March 24 at St. Dominic's Deaf Center in

Houston.

Invitations to speak at the hearings were sent to the local councils for the deaf, officers of the Texas Association of the Deaf (TAD), clubs for the deaf, officers of the Texas Society of Interpreters for the Deaf (TSID), TCD advisory committees and the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI). Persons who were unable to attend the hearings were invited to send in written statements through April 2.

"The results of the public hearings were substantial and will contribute significantly to the overall design of a legislative package for the upcoming session," said Fred Tammen, the Executive Director of the TCD. "The Commission was pleased that deaf people exercised their right to participate in the TCD hearings."

# Sunset

from page 2

services from an organization with which they traditionally have little contact. Therefore, the Commission opposes the concept of competitive bidding for its council for the deaf contracts.

6. **The statute should be amended to require that records held by the agency containing client information should be made confidential.**

The agency has begun acquiring information regarding deaf clients and the families of deaf/blind individuals that is normally held confidential by other agencies. The agency's statute should be modified to allow the TCD to hold this information confidential.

*Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*The Texas Commission for the Deaf has begun to acquire in the client case files the type of information that has been classified as confidential in other human service agencies. In order to protect the confidential information these records may contain, the Commissioners agree that records should be made confidential.*

## Program or Activity Alternative

**The agency could develop a central message relay service to provide deaf people with better telephone accessibility to state agencies.**

Since 1981, the agency has been placing TDDs (telecommunication devices for the deaf) in state agencies. Agency records indicate that barely half of the units in place for six months or longer have been used. It appears the money appropriated to continue this program in fiscal 1985 could be better used in developing a central message relay service at the agency's Austin office and distributing the unused TDDs to locations throughout the state where they can be utilized for local message relay centers.

**Pros to this Alternative:**

- A message relay system does not limit calling only to persons or locations having TDDs; the overall phone system is accessible.

- Remaining surplus funds in the program for placing TDDs in state agencies would be used to expand services by contracting with local councils for the deaf and perhaps councils of governments in areas where no council currently exists.
- State monies are no longer being used to purchase TDDs that simply sit in state agencies never being used to make or receive a single call.

**Cons to this Alternative:**

- Costs for implementing the central message relay system would be recurring each year. There would be the payment for a toll-free phone number and the salary of an additional staff person to answer and relay calls.

*Response of TCD Commissioners:*

*The Commission supports this alternative because a message relay system has the potential of accessing every telephone, whereas deaf persons are now limited to placing calls only to those offices or persons possessing a TDD.*

The Sunset Advisory Commission, as a result of further input received on their initial set of recommendations, will develop a legislative package to present to the Texas Legislature for action as the Legislature deems appropriate. The upcoming session of the Texas Legislature will begin on Tuesday, January 8, 1985.

Copies of the complete Sunset Advisory Commission staff report on the TCD are available for \$3.15, plus postage and handling charges, from the Sunset Advisory Commission, P.O. Box 13066, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711; telephone 512/475-1718 (Voice or TDD).

## WGD track tryouts deadline May 1

The deadline for entering Austin's track and field tryouts for the World Games for the Deaf is May 1. Contact TSD, TTY or Voice 512-442-7821, ext. 274.

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