

Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Mission: The division provides a broad range of services for children and adults, their families and the professionals who serve them. The division also provides interpreter services, advocacy, access to technology and coordination of human services for the deaf and hard of hearing. <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/docs/divinfo/dsdhh.htm>

Service Delivery Challenges: The top service delivery challenges for the division include advocacy, consumer skills development, outreach, consultation, and training. Advocacy challenges include eliminating resistance among service providers to provide effective communication in medical/health settings. This includes both public and private healthcare providers. The Consumer Skills Development challenge includes many individuals not seeking additional information regarding health issues because of communication barriers. Outreach challenges relate to reaching deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing individuals in rural areas and reaching minority deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing citizens. Another challenge involves collaborating with other agencies to identify options for achieving equal access and providing educational opportunities to agencies.

Socio-cultural Challenges: Socio-cultural challenges for the division include misconceptions about deafness, language barriers, stigma, and consumers not trusting the system. The division's top three focus areas include disability, education, and income. Regarding resources to address disparities, the division observed that "qualified specialists focus on primary conditions of deafness, hearing loss and deaf-blindness to eliminate disparities. The Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program eliminates some communication barriers. Grants have been secured to help purchase hearing aids as well."

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING – HEALTH DISPARITIES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

KEY

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION STEPS

TIME LINE

EVALUATION

DATA

NEEDS

RESOURCES

<p>1. Increase awareness of health and service disparities, especially disparities related to race/ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status.</p>	<p>Refer all DHHS “health focused” divisions to the DHHS Communication Access Provision policy.</p> <p>Provide in service training; “Orientation to Deafness to all health care divisions within DHHS to assist in initiating equal access.</p> <p>Continue outreach to private health care facilities in regards to equal access to effective communication</p>	<p>January 2003</p>	<p>Response from the original request for support</p> <p>Documentation of the number of agencies that received training</p>	<p>Resource Center daily documentation or quarterly Reports.</p>	<p>Existing collaboration efforts from the Department</p> <p>Resource Centers employ specialists in each of the critical areas of its focus.</p>
<p>2. Communicate, document, and champion best-practices in eliminating health disparities</p>	<p>Partner with health care agencies and provide input on promoting best practices to support access for the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf/blind</p>	<p>July 2003</p>	<p>Survey area health care providers about contact with RRC</p>	<p>Survey development</p>	<p>Existing staff</p>
<p>3. Promote, develop, and enhance community’s capacity to engage in healthy living and elimination of disparities in health status.</p>	<p>Conduct consumer education series to inform citizens of available health services.</p> <p>Partner with consumer organizations to disseminate information on eliminating disparities.</p>	<p>March 2003</p>	<p>Biannual evaluation through consumer surveys and one on one interviews.</p>	<p>DSDHH recently developed a consumer satisfaction survey. They have not been used yet.</p>	<p>RRC specialist could conduct education series with the support of health agency experts and consumer organization representatives</p>
<p>4. Monitor progress towards the elimination of health disparities</p>	<p>Advocate for equal access to health services for deaf, deaf/blind and hard of hearing citizens</p>	<p>July 2003</p>	<p>Quarterly evaluation could be done based on consumer requests for support by way of advocacy</p>	<p>Current documentation kept by RRC staff via quarterly report</p>	<p>RRC staff</p>

**DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING – HEALTH DISPARITIES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
KEY AVAILABLE
RECOMMENDATIONS DATA NEEDS EVALUATION TIME LINE ACTION STEPS**

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS	TIME LINE	EVALUATION	DATA NEEDS	AVAILABLE RESOURCES
5. Promote customer friendly services that meet the needs of under served populations (i.e., low-income and minority groups)	Partner with health care agencies to reach the minority communities of the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf/blind.	July 2003	Consumer satisfaction surveys		Existing staff and volunteers
6. Increase resources/investments to eliminate health status gaps	Seek grant (s) to promote awareness of health issues within the deaf, deaf/blind and hard of hearing communities to eliminate health status gaps	July 2003	Review of such grants	Information on funding sources	Collaboration has already begun with grant writers with knowledge of deafness and health issues.
7. Build, support and fully utilize a diverse workforce capable of working in cross-cultural settings.	Promote partnering with representatives from minority communities. Utilize the strengths of all staff by cross-training when appropriate to achieve greater access to communities	July 2003	Documentation in work plans.	None	Current staff
8. Identify and advocate for public policies that aid in closing the health status gap.	Partner with healthcare agencies and organizations	January 2003			Current staff
9. Demonstrate Accountability and Ownership for Health Outcomes	Incorporate some level of focus on health issues within the work plan of appropriate staff in the DSDHH	July 2003	Biannually with Performance Management Program		Existing work plan format