***COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA***

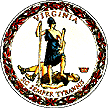
Ronald L. Lanier

Director

# *Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

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Notice of Change:

Interpreter Services for 12-Step Programs and Funerals

**Background:**

On October 15, 2014, Governor McAuliffe announced changes in the State budget for Fiscal Year 2015 (July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015). The original budget, approved by the General Assembly and the Governor earlier in 2014, was based on estimates of how much money the state expected to collect (revenue projections) from taxes, fees, etc. Cuts to the budget are necessary because such revenue collections have been down in the Commonwealth. When he announced the cuts, the Governor said, “Making these budget reductions has been the most difficult experience of my term so far. In a government as lean and well-run as ours, there are few spending cuts you can make without impacting the lives of Virginians.”

When budget cuts have been made in the past, the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) has been able to maintain a stable level of direct services. Unfortunately, the cuts announced last week include a reduction in funding for the Interpreter Services Program (ISP) for Fiscal Year 2015. Specifically, VDDHH will have to reduce the interpreter services provided for 12-step meetings and funerals through June 30, 2015. We do not know if we will be able to restore these services for Fiscal Year 2016, which starts on July 1, 2015; it will depend upon the budget approved by the 2015 General Assembly.

**About Sign Language Interpreters for 12-Step Meetings (Alcoholics Anonymous/AA; Narcotics Anonymous/NA)**

Effective November 1, 2014, VDDHH will not be able to pay for sign language interpreters for 12-Step (AA/NA) meetings. We are working with Alcoholics Anonymous of Virginia Special Needs Committees to find out how local chapters can support the cost of interpreters for these meetings.

There are some other resources that can support Deaf people with substance abuse issues:

* + If you are a client of a Community Services Board (CSB), you should ask about communication access (and related funding) for your meetings.
  + There are online 12-step meetings available for Deaf people.
  + Deaf Off Drugs and Alcohol (DODA) has a website that includes information and access to online meetings, and a link to DODA's schedule of meetings. Here is the link: <http://www.med.wright.edu/citar/sardi/doda>.

**About Sign Language Interpreters for Funerals and Memorial Services**

Effective November 1, 2014, VDDHH will not be able to pay for sign language interpreters for visitations, funerals or memorial services. Families should ask the funeral home to provide an interpreter. The funeral home can contact VDDHH at 804-662-9502 for help in locating an interpreter but VDDHH will not be able to pay for the interpreter. VDDHH will be working to provide more information to funeral home directors about the need for interpreters. If you have a complaint about a funeral home because it does not provide effective communication, you may be able to file an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complaint. For more information, you may contact:

* The US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, ADA Office: <http://www.ada.gov/filing_complaint.htm>
* The DisAbility Law Center of Virginia: <http://disabilitylawva.org/>

If you have any questions about these changes, please contact VDDHH at 804-662-9502.