

Scott Walker  
Governor



**State of Wisconsin**

**COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**  
1 WEST WILSON STREET  
ROOM 558  
PO BOX 7851  
MADISON WI 53707-7851

September 18, 2013

Linda Harris  
Deputy Administrator  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
1 West Wilson Street  
Room 850  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Ms. Harris,

Please support restoration of funding to the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) for the improvement of mental health and substance abuse services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind in Wisconsin.

The ODHH received a portion of money (\$37,000 per year) from the Mental Health block grant two years ago. A "Steering Committee for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind" was created and included representatives from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind communities, some of their family members, state employees, and mental health and substance abuse professionals. The Steering Committee created a strategic plan to promote better access to mental health and substance abuse services for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. The goals were outlined to help break down communication and cultural barriers that make it difficult for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind to receive appropriate mental and substance abuse healthcare services.

A primary early outcome of the strategic plan was a very successful 2012 summit designed to educate stakeholders and other interested individuals about the lack of appropriate mental health and substance abuse service availability for the many Wisconsin residents as listed above. The ODDH needs ongoing funding so the Steering Committee can implement other core objectives of the strategic plan agenda including but not limited to:

- Completion & distribution of educational videos and a procedure manual/tool-kit for mental and substance abuse healthcare service providers appropriate to the specific needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind
- Creation of support program concepts to promote education & licensure for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind in the fields of mental health, substance abuse & social work in Wisconsin
- Exploration of cyber-technology (Telehealth) & other possibilities to encourage additional expansion of mental and substance abuse healthcare services to those who have limited or completely restricted access due to communication barriers

An important function of the Department of Health Services is to provide equal health care service “provider” opportunities for all residents of Wisconsin. The ODHH Steering Committee will continue to make significant progress toward that specific DHS commitment in terms of mental healthcare and substance abuse for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind if funding for this important program is renewed.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

The Governor’s Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

cc: Kitty Rhoades, Secretary of the Department of Health Services  
Kevin Moore, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health Services