

January 2026

Empowering
Independence

WHAT'S UP?

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services**

Happy New Year!

DHILS joined CLW staff and Board members at our annual Holiday party at Val's in Holden. It's always special to have time at the end of the year to get together with colleagues and celebrate the season. We enjoyed a delicious meal while chatting with Bob Bureau, Board member, watched lucky raffle winners choose their prizes, and cheered on Priscilla, who won the Ugly Sweater Contest. This is also when staff are recognized for their service. Both Ellen Perkins and Kim White received awards for 15 years of service.

Happy New Year!



CLW Staff and Board Members



Ugly Sweater Contest Participants

1st Place Winner,
Priscilla!

Bob (Board Member), Priscilla, Ellen, Joan, Kim and Rosemary

Ellen and Kim:
15 Year
Service AwardRosemary, Ellen, Joan,
Kim and Priscilla

TLC Announces the Gala Emcee!

JAC - often known as a “JAC of all trades”, is a sharp-witted, dynamic Master of Ceremonies, auctioneer, and Deaf ASL consultant with nearly 30 years of experience across theatre, film, education, and live events.

Renowned for commanding the room with warmth, precision, and humor, JAC has served as Master of Ceremonies for galas, fundraising events, and national programs including the NAD Deaf Miss America / Ambassador Program, engaging diverse audiences with clarity and cultural fluency. Being on the stage is their home.

Beyond the stage, JAC made history as the first ASL performer featured in Disney+ Marvel’s *Ant-Man* (2015) and has since held senior creative roles including Director of Artistic Sign Language (DASL), Quality & Assurance Supervisor, and translator for major productions such as *Barbie* and *Beetlejuice*.

JAC is the founder of Velvet Hands, an ASL theatrical interpreting group providing ASL theatrical interpreting services for theatre venues now in its tenth year.

A Gallaudet University graduate, JAC served 12 years at the California School for the Deaf, Fremont, as a School and Community Resource Coordinator. Now based in Maryland, JAC works as a freelance Deaf interpreter, adjunct professor in theatre, and sales & marketing strategist for the Deaf- and woman-owned Keystone Interpreting Solutions.

JAC eagerly anticipates joining the celebration of The Learning Center for the Deaf’s 55th anniversary as a trailblazer in Deaf excellence in education, advocacy, and community programs!

See flier in Events for ticket information.

*The Learning Center for the Deaf
Celebrating 55 Years*



2025 End of Year Message from MCDHH Commissioner Sotonwa

Hello friends,

As we close out Year 2025, I invite us to pause — to reflect — and to celebrate how far we have come together.

This year reminded us that progress is never easy, but it is always possible. Across the Commonwealth, our Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened communities faced barriers that tested our patience and our resolve. Yet in every challenge, our community showed its strength — with courage, creativity, and heart.

When the doors seemed closed, we found new ways in. When voices were ignored, we signed louder. And when access was questioned, we answered with action.

Because of your determination — our staff, partners, and community advocates — MCDHH has not only moved forward; we have made measurable, meaningful progress.

This year, we served over 2,300 individuals, provided more than 4,000 hours of advocacy, and delivered 2,200 hours of recovery support statewide. Behind every number is a name, a story, a life changed. These are not statistics — they are proof that our collective effort is working.

We also made historic strides in training and awareness. Through the Massachusetts Police Training Council, 24,000 law enforcement officers — along with EMTs, hospital staff, and community providers — received Deaf and Hard of Hearing awareness training. That means tens of thousands of first responders are now better prepared to ensure that communication access is a reality in every emergency, every encounter, every moment that matters.

Our CATTs team expanded digital accessibility, producing over 120 ASL-accessible videos that bring vital information directly to our community in our language. In doing so, we are building a Massachusetts where accessibility is not an accommodation — it's the foundation.

Yes, we have faced staffing challenges and funding pressures. But through it all, our team has stayed focused and fearless. Because when purpose is clear, persistence follows — and our purpose has never been clearer: to ensure that every Deaf and Hard of Hearing person in Massachusetts can live, work, and thrive with full access to opportunity.

As we step into the new year, our vision is strong. We will continue to listen intently, collaborate boldly, and meet the challenge of this moment — together.

Accessibility is not a privilege; it's a promise. Inclusion is not a wish; it's work. And progress is not measured by how fast we go — but by how fully we go together.

To our partners, allies, and community members — thank you. Your trust, your feedback, and your shared commitment make this work possible.

Together, we are shaping a Commonwealth where communication flows freely, where every voice matters, and where belonging is not the goal — it's the starting point.

May the year ahead bring peace, joy, and renewed strength to all. Let's keep building — boldly, compassionately, and together with gratitude and hope.



Watch the VLOG here:

youtube.com/watch?v=E0KMummsQuU&feature=youtu.be

Stay Healthy in the New Year

[From **Stay Healthy with Dr. Oz: Chair Yoga**]

Taking care of your mind is just as important as taking care of your body. It can help us handle stress, stay healthier, and even boost energy.



Take time for self-care to help strengthen your mental well-being:

Practice mindful movements. Exercise like yoga doesn't just boost your mood, it can also improve your memory and help you think more clearly. TIP: Use a chair for more support (*see video link below*).



Stay connected. Social bonds are essential for well-being. Reach out to friends or family for emotional support. If you're feeling lonely or isolated, consider volunteering to build connections in your community.



Meditate. Quieting your mind can help you feel calmer and more focused. Find a quiet place, take deep breaths, and check in with different parts of your body.



<https://youtu.be/-mjELShEgiM?si=uDjeCiqREQMl9ITw>

Disability Health Research Study

Researchers at *The Lurie Institute for Disability Policy* are studying the sexual and reproductive health needs and experiences of young people with disabilities. **They are still recruiting!**

To participate, people must:

- Have been born in the United States
- Live in the United States
- Be between 15 and 25 years old
- Have a health condition or disability (hearing, vision, physical, intellectual, or developmental disability)
- Be able to talk to us in English or American Sign Language over a Zoom call

Participants will do a 1-hour Zoom call to talk about their experiences. *American Sign Language interpretation and accommodations will be provided on request.*

Why is this study important? Why should you care or share this information?

- Learn more about young people with disabilities' experiences with sexual and reproductive health.
- It will help researchers create a website for young people with disabilities to teach them about taking care of their sexual and reproductive health.
- Our findings could be used to help advocate for youth with disabilities.

Why should participants tell their story?

- Stories will help create a website to teach people with disabilities about sexual health.
- Their voice will help inform and add to the little research on this important topic.

\$50 gift card.

Contact information: Anyone who is interested can email YouthStudy@Brandeis.edu or call Janelle Mills at 781-736-3928. **More information is on our [website](#).**

Research Study Opportunity



Are you Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or Late-Deafened — and age 7 or older?

**JOIN OUR RESEARCH TO HELP DEVELOP
ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS FOR THE
DHH COMMUNITY!**



**TAKE THE SURVEY. GET \$20.
BE PART OF THE CHANGE.**



Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Child Resilience Center



innivee
STRATEGIES

This study has been approved by Gallaudet University's IRB, IRB-FY25-117

Worcester Parent Guide to Community Resources

[CLICK HERE FOR ENGLISH GUIDE](#)



UPDATED: Therapists for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Directory

Click here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mRNQIKYYNjM4vYpRX7OECQkiW-PQlu62/view?usp=sharing>



MISSED A *WHAT'S UP* NEWSLETTER?
Past issues of newsletters are on our website!
VISIT: [HTTPS://WWW.CENTERLW.ORG/2022/07/WHATS-UP-NEWSLETTER/](https://www.CenterLW.org/2022/07/whats-up-newsletter/)



Questions? Contact your Skills Trainer

Joan Philip	DHILS Director	508-762-1165 (VP)
Priscilla Langone	DHILS Administrative Assistant	508-556-1600 (VP)
Ellen Perkins	DHILS Asst. Manager/Hard of Hearing Skills Trainer	508-502-7576 (Voice); 508-762-1354 (VP)
Rosemary Moreira	Senior Deaf Skills Trainer (Full-time)	508-762-1166 (VP)
Denise Paro	Deaf Skills Trainer (Part-time)	508-762-1021 (VP)
Vacant	Deaf Skills Trainer (Full-time)	
Vacant	Deaf Skills Trainer (Part-time)	
Kim White	Staff Interpreter	508-755-1042 (Voice); 508-283-1036 (VP)

Contact Us!

Center for Living & Working, Inc.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services Department

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www.CenterLW.org



Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services



CLW: www.facebook.com/CenterForLivingAndWorking

DHILS Group: www.facebook.com/groups/clw.dhils