



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

ODHH Monthly Bulletin

July 2010

A message from Director Lisa Kornberg

New. That is the theme this month for ODHH. As you can see, we are using a new system to distribute our newsletter. We hope you enjoy it and, as always, welcome your feedback. We are also gearing up for a new fiscal year, which means you can look forward to our annual report for July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 in early fall.

The staff at ODHH also has a new, temporary addition. Zainab Alkebsi (see below) from the University of Baltimore School of Law is interning with us this summer. We are delighted to have her with us.

Finally, the ODHH website is receiving some extra attention as we work to revamp our "Resource" section, add more vlogs (below), and update content. These exciting changes will happen over the coming months, so check back often for updates.

From the staff at ODHH, have a great summer!

-Lisa

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MDOT Increases Accessibility



Getting around on public transportation has been challenging at times for Marylanders who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. Whether it is access to announcements at BWI Airport or the lack of LED signs on MTA buses, deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind constituents frequently contact our Office with their concerns. ODHH shared these concerns with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). MDOT is a member of the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We are happy to report that MDOT has responded in full force and has begun several very exciting projects that will improve accessibility for people with hearing loss in Maryland. Here is a glimpse of the changes in transportation you will be seeing:

BWI Airport

Current PA announcements are being scripted and will be placed on the visual paging monitors around the airport. MDOT is also working on improving signage notifying patrons of their accessibility features such as the location of TTYs and service animal relief areas. Additionally, MDOT will be working to make information available to the public on the ADA Coordinator, complaint procedures, and an ADA nondiscrimination notice.



If you own your home in Maryland, you should have received an Assessment Notice on your house from the State in January of this year. New this year is a requirement to fill out a one-time form if your home is your principal residence and if you want to continue the valuable Homestead Tax Credit. Enclosed was an "Application for Homestead Tax Eligibility" with information like an access number that you will need if you want to fill out the form online. You can find that form at:

<http://www.dat.state.md.us>.

The application form can be found directly through:
<https://sdathtc.resiusa.org/homestead/>.

The property tax bill will be sent out in July 1, 2010, so if you have not filled out the form yet, do so as quickly as possible. The online form is recommended for faster processing.

Quick Links

[ODHH Website](#)



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LED Signage for MTA Light Rail, MARC and Metro Trains

The Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) currently has contracts with vendors to replace the public information system equipment on both the Metro Subway and MARC train system. The new systems, which will be ADA compliant, will have variable message LED signs to provide information to the public. Construction has begun for both projects and equipment installation is currently underway. The Metro's new signs will be available starting this July and MARC stations will begin receiving their new signs by the end of July.

The Central Light Rail Line will also be receiving a new PA-LED system. The project is expected to receive bids next month with equipment installation likely starting around June of next year.

We are proud to be part of team that is willing to respond so completely to the needs of our constituent population. A special thank you goes out to John Gaver, Julie Moyer, and Robin Underwood at MDOT for helping make communication access a priority at MDOT.

New Vlogs on ODHH Website



ODHH is in the process posting four new vlogs on our website. The new vlogs should be available on our website by June 30.

The first is a vlog about the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. It can be viewed at http://odhh.md.gov/advisory_council.html. The second is a vlog on emergency preparedness in Maryland and can be viewed at <http://odhh.md.gov/ep.html>. The third and fourth vlogs both relate to the Maryland Commission on Human Relations (MCHR). One gives an overview of

MCHR, which is in charge of enforcing the State's antidiscrimination laws. Another explains how to file a complaint with MCHR. Both can be viewed at <http://odhh.md.gov/resources.html> in the new "Legal and Self Advocacy" section. All V-logs are in American Sign Language and also have captions and voice-over. There are also transcripts posted.

If there is a topic you would like to see ODHH cover in a V-log, please email us at odhh@gov.state.md.us and we will consider your request for an upcoming V-log.

Register to Vote in Primary Election



The deadline to register to vote in the September 14th primary election is August 24, 2010.

A primary election (nominating primary), also referred to simply as a primary, is an election in which voters in a jurisdiction select candidates for a subsequent election. Primary elections are one means by which a political party nominates candidates for the following general election.

A voter registration application may be submitted to your local board of elections or the State Board of Elections at any time. However, an application must be postmarked by August 24,

2010 to vote in the Primary Election and October 12, 2010 to vote in the General Election.

For more information on registering to vote, visit the ODHH website at <http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/vote.html> or contact Julie Anne Schafer at jschafer@gov.state.md.us. If you are not registered to vote, there's no better time to register than now!

Meet ODHH Intern Zainab Alkebsi

ODHH on the Move

State Directors Meeting

Tuesday, July 6
Philadelphia Marriott
Philadelphia, PA

National Association of the Deaf Biennial Conference

Weds. July 7- Sat. July 10
Philadelphia Marriott
Philadelphia, PA

ODHH will be closed on July 5th in observance of Independence Day

Zainab Alkebsi is a 22-year-old law student at the University of Baltimore. She is interested in disability law, given her own background in that area. Her hearing loss was discovered when she was 18 months old. Growing up, she learned both ASL and Cued Speech. Later, at age 10, she received a cochlear implant in her left ear, which drastically improved her hearing.

Zainab is a product of the Montgomery County Public School system, where she was primarily mainstreamed and used a Cued Speech transliterator. While Zainab's experiences have been largely positive, she feels that there are far too many stories about battles for accommodations and struggles against discrimination. As a result, she started thinking about a career in disability law. She attended the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) on a full academic scholarship and graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. She has completed her first year at UB Law and is enjoying interning at ODHH this summer, where she hopes to help develop policies that will further benefit deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind individuals as well as foster communication and understanding between the deaf community and other agencies.

Social Security Administration Issues Final Rules on Medical Criteria for Evaluating Hearing Loss

Effective August 1, 2010, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will be using new medical criteria for evaluating hearing loss. The SSA will use these new rules to evaluate hearing loss in both adults and children who apply for or receive Social Security disability benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments based on disability. The electronic file of this document is available on the date of publication (November 20, 2006/71FR67037) in the Federal Register at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

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