

Article - State Government

§9-2401.

- (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.
- (b) “Council” means the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals.
- (c) (1) “Deaf and hard of hearing individuals” means those residents of Maryland who have a partial or complete loss of hearing.
(2) “Deaf and hard of hearing individuals” includes individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and late-deafened.
(3) “Deafblind” means those residents of Maryland who have concomitant vision and hearing loss.
- (d) “Director” means the Director of the Office.
- (e) “Office” means the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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§9-2402.

(a) In the Office of the Governor, there is an Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

(b) (1) The head of the Office is the Director.

(2) (i) The Director is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(ii) The Director serves at the pleasure of the Governor and is responsible directly to the Governor.

(3) The Director shall be:

(i) a deaf or hard of hearing person; and

(ii) knowledgeable and experienced with issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(4) The Director is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.

(c) (1) The Office shall:

(i) advise the Governor on all matters assigned to the Office; and

(ii) carry out the Governor's policies on the matters assigned to the Office.

(2) The Director shall:

(i) manage the operation of the Office and establish guidelines and procedures to promote the orderly and efficient operation of the Office; and

(ii) adopt regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this subtitle.

(3) Subject to the provisions of this subtitle, the Director may establish, reorganize, or consolidate areas of responsibility in the Office as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned by the Director.

(d) The Office shall be given adequate staff and funding to carry out its duties.

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§9-2403.

(a) The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State.

(b) The responsibilities of the Office shall include:

(1) providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) improving access to communication and to existing services and programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals as appropriate;

(4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services;

(6) developing a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(8) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to educational, health, and social opportunities;

(9) working with private organizations, the federal government, and other units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(10) working to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(11) providing a network through which services provided by State and federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled; and

(12) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(c) The Office shall hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to receive public comments on:

(1) the quality of State services and programs affecting deaf and hard of

hearing individuals;

(2) the functions and operations of the Office; and

(3) any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including those specified in subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The Office shall:

(1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local, and other public services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

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§9-2404.

(a) There is a Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

(b) (1) The Council consists of 18 members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(2) Of the 18 Council members, at least five of the members shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(c) Of the 18 Council members:

(1) one shall be the State Superintendent or a designee from the State Department of Education;

(2) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;

(3) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Human Resources;

(4) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Transportation;

(5) one shall be from the Commission on Civil Rights;

(6) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation;

(7) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Housing and Community Development;

(8) one shall be the Superintendent or a designee from the Maryland School for the Deaf;

(9) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Aging;
and

(10) nine shall be from the general public.

(d) (1) The nine members from the general public shall be chosen from different geographical areas of the State.

(2) Of the nine members from the general public:

(i) five shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(ii) one shall be a private citizen with special knowledge or expertise

relating to services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(iii) one shall be a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child;

(iv) one shall be from a private agency providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(v) one shall be a person with special knowledge or expertise relating to services to individuals who are deafblind.

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§9-2405.

- (a) The term of a member of the Council is 3 years.
- (b) The terms of the members are staggered as required by the terms provided for members of the Council on October 1, 2001.
- (c) At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is appointed and qualifies.
- (d) A member who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.
- (e) A member may not serve consecutively more than two 3-year terms.
- (f) Any member who fails to attend at least 50 percent of the regularly scheduled meetings during any 12-month period shall be considered to have resigned.

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§9-2406.

The Council shall:

- (1) advise the Office in carrying out its duties;
- (2) review statewide activities for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including reviewing reports and publications of committees and commissions;
- (3) foster coordination of and support for programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- (4) study ways to maximize the use of the facilities and services available to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- (5) hold:
 - (i) at least quarterly, regularly scheduled meetings; and
 - (ii) open meetings to provide direct communication, between deaf and hard of hearing individuals and private and public organizations and the general public, about programs and services for and needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and
- (6) assist any local governing body of a county to establish a local advisory council for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the county for purposes of implementing the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other relevant State and federal laws.

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§9-2407.

On or before January 1, 2002, and annually thereafter, the Director shall submit to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of this article, to the members of the General Assembly, a report on:

- (1) the activities of the Office;
- (2) the status of programs and services facilitated by the Office;
- (3) statistics on compliance with State and federal laws related to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and
- (4) recommendations for improved delivery of services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.