

Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) Strategic Plan FY2026–FY2028

Mission:

Ensure all Marylanders who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing have equal access to resources, services, and opportunities across all aspects of community life, promoting equity, accessibility, and full inclusion.

Vision:

A Maryland where Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (D/DB/HH) individuals are fully included in community life, with access to culturally competent services, communication supports, and equitable opportunities for education, employment, health, and safety.

1. Core Statutory Responsibilities

Per statute ([ODHH Statute](#)):

1. Advocate and coordinate adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs for D/DB/HH Marylanders.
 2. Serve as an information clearinghouse on D/DB/HH needs.
 3. Increase access to education, health, and social opportunities.
 4. Promote compliance with state, local, and federal laws protecting D/DB/HH individuals.
 5. Develop referral services and promote economic development.
 6. Maintain partnerships with state and local agencies, private organizations, and federal programs.
 7. Host public town halls and engage communities for feedback.
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2. Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Ensure Full Communication and Language Access

Objective: Guarantee access to communication supports across all state programs and initiatives for D/DB/HH residents.

Strategies:

- Require ASL, protactile language, captioning, and accessible materials across all programs, including OAA-funded aging programs.
- Maintain and enhance the Maryland OneStop Interpreter Licensure Portal, ensuring reliable, accessible application and renewal processes.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to state agencies for inclusive communication practices.
- Offer ongoing training for state staff, interpreters, and service providers in Deaf culture, accessibility, and preferred communication methods.

Challenges & Risks:

- Limited portal maintenance budget (\$55,000).
- Technical dependencies on external vendors.
- Delays in regulations for SBSLI affecting licensing and compliance. (new regulations published deadline 12.31.2026)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- % of state programs providing ASL or accessible materials.
- Number of interpreters licensed through OneStop portal annually.
- Staff trained in Deaf culture and accessibility.

Goal 2: Strengthen Community Engagement and Public Awareness

Objective: Expand outreach and community involvement to inform and empower D/DB/HH Marylanders.

Strategies:

- Host at least **two annual town halls** to gather public feedback.
- Partner with organizations such as PGCAD, BCAD, MDAD, MDSC, MDCC, Deaf Cultural Digital Library (DCDL), 2 Rivers at Crofton, MWADB.
- Promote Deaf culture awareness through public events, workshops, and statewide campaigns.
- Provide accessible information on elder rights, public safety, and emergency preparedness.

Challenges & Risks:

- Difficulty sharing timely information due to delayed regulations or General Assembly response.
- Ensuring engagement reaches marginalized and isolated populations.

KPIs:

- of town halls hosted and participants reached.
- % of materials disseminated in ASL, captioned, or tactile formats.

- Community satisfaction and feedback metrics collected via surveys.
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Goal 3: Improve Access to Services for Seniors and Vulnerable Populations

Objective: Reduce isolation and improve quality of life for D/DB/HH seniors and underserved groups.

Strategies:

- Provide accessible transportation and communication technologies for seniors.
- Fund Deaf-led or DeafBlind-accessible clubs, programs, and peer support groups.
- Develop videophone and penpal programs to reduce social isolation.
- Train aging services staff to use appropriate communication methods.

Challenges & Risks:

- Limited funding and staff capacity to support statewide programs.
- Coordination with MDOA, CSD, and community organizations requires ongoing effort.

KPIs:

- of seniors reached through programs.
 - % increase in participation by D/DB/HH seniors in state programs.
 - Satisfaction survey results for communication and program accessibility.
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Goal 4: Promote Workforce Development and Economic Inclusion

Objective: Increase employment, professional development, and career opportunities for D/DB/HH individuals.

Strategies:

- Host job fairs, open houses, and networking events for D/DB/HH applicants and interpreters.
- Support interpreter education, certification (NIC/BEI), and continuing education.
- Advocate for legislation reducing underemployment and promoting workplace accessibility.
- Collaborate with state agencies and private organizations for internships, stipends, and mentorships.

Challenges & Risks:

- Delays in licensing regulations affect workforce readiness.
- Limited staffing to track employment outcomes and provide targeted support.

KPIs:

- of licensed interpreters and D/DB/HH professionals entering workforce.
 - of employment-focused events hosted annually.
 - of participants receiving internships, stipends, or scholarships.
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Goal 5: Enhance Policy, Planning, and Regulatory Compliance

Objective: Ensure D/DB/HH voices are integrated into statewide decision-making and regulations.

Strategies:

- Advocate for inclusion of D/DB/HH individuals on boards and councils (e.g., SBSLI, MACDHH).
- Provide technical support to legislation and regulatory development (e.g., Sign Language Interpreter Act).
- Develop tracking systems for demographic data, service usage, and licensing compliance.
- Ensure APS, legal aid, and ombudsman services are accessible for D/DB/HH seniors.

Challenges & Risks:

- Delays in regulation finalization impact compliance and enforcement.
- Limited internal staff capacity for systemic advocacy and regulatory monitoring.

KPIs:

- % of boards/councils with D/DB/HH representation.
 - Timeliness of regulatory compliance updates and license approvals.
 - of public policies influenced or implemented to improve D/DB/HH inclusion.
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Goal 6: Improve Data Collection, Reporting, and Impact Measurement

Objective: Utilize accurate data to drive program improvements and policy decisions.

Strategies:

- Disaggregate service usage by hearing status, communication mode, and disability type.
- Track contacts, referrals, and engagement across walk-ins, emails, and phone requests.
- Collect outcomes from community programs, aging services, and workforce initiatives.
- Use data to identify barriers, inform policies, and allocate resources effectively.

Challenges & Risks:

- Inconsistent reporting across agencies.

- Limited technological infrastructure to centralize data collection.

KPIs:

- Number of contacts tracked and analyzed annually.
- Data reports submitted to the Governor's Office and General Assembly on time.
- Improvements in access and service quality identified through data analysis.

3. Organizational Capacity and Team Growth

Proposed Positions:

1. Policy Manager/Deputy Director: Regulatory development, staff supervision, policy advocacy.
2. Compliance Officer: Oversees SBSLI licensure compliance, complaint investigation.
3. D/DB/HH Advocate: Provides education, systemic advocacy, and constituent support.

Rationale:

Expanding staff supports statutory obligations, improves responsiveness, and strengthens equity and accessibility for D/DB/HH communities.

4. External Stakeholders

- Maryland Deaf Community Center (MDCC)
- Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD)
- Maryland School for the Deaf (MDSC)
- Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA)
- Telecommunications Access Program (MDOD)
- State agencies, local governments, advocacy groups, and federal partners
- Legislators: Senators and Delegates engaged in D/DB/HH policy

5. Challenges and Risk Mitigation

Challenge	Risk	Mitigation
Delayed SBSLI regulations	Noncompliance, licensing backlog	Workgroup engagement, public updates, temporary guidance

Limited budget	Reduced service capacity	Advocate for funding, prioritize portal and high-impact programs
Community engagement gaps	Isolation and missed services	Partner with D/DB/HH organizations, expand town halls and media outreach
Staff capacity	Regulatory, compliance, and outreach delays	Hire Policy Manager, Compliance Officer, and Advocate positions

6. Metrics of Success

- Increased accessibility of state programs (ASL, tactile, captioned materials)
 - Increased number of licensed interpreters and workforce integration of D/DB/HH professionals
 - Reduced social isolation and improved participation in community programs for seniors
 - Timely regulatory compliance and legislative advocacy impact
 - Stakeholder satisfaction and community engagement levels
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7. Implementation Timeline

FY2026:

- Strengthen OneStop portal and address SBSLI regulatory delays.
- Expand outreach and town halls for public engagement.
- Launch senior engagement programs and data tracking initiatives.

FY2027:

- Implement workforce development initiatives, interpreter certification support.
- Expand training programs for state staff and service providers.
- Begin reporting KPIs to the Governor's Office and General Assembly.

FY2028:

- Evaluate outcomes for seniors, workforce, and community engagement.
 - Update policies and procedures based on data and stakeholder feedback.
 - Institutionalize practices to ensure long-term accessibility, equity, and inclusion.
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This strategic plan ensures alignment with the statute, Governor's Office priorities, and executive directives, while addressing short-term and long-term goals, challenges, and opportunities for D/DB/HH Marylanders.