

Alternative Pathways (AP) Taskforce – Meeting #4 Minutes

Date: June 17, 2026

Time: 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Platform: Zoom

Attendance

Members Present:

Tiasha Bera
Caitlin Comstock
Joshua Finkle
Jacob Leffler, SBSLI Chair (Taskforce Lead)
Jadalynn Orr
James Skjeveland, SBSLI Member
Sarah Yates

GODDBHH Staff Support

Usherla DeBerry

Members Absent:

Jimmy Beldon
Jill Owens Brick
Blaise Delahoussaye
Marylourdes Gayles
Thomas Horejes
April Jackson-Woodard
Jerri Seremeth

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Jacob Leffler.

For accessibility and accurate recordkeeping, each participant introduced themselves by stating their name, sign name, and providing a brief visual description of their appearance and background. Participants continued to identify themselves before speaking throughout the meeting.

Member Introductions

Joshua Finkle introduced himself as a Deaf professional who lives in Maryland and works in both Maryland and New York.

Additional introductions were provided by all taskforce members.

2. Overview of Taskforce Charge and Scope

The taskforce reviewed Jim's proposed meeting schedule:

June 3: Purpose, Constraints, and Definitions

June 17: Competency Framework

July 1: Evidence and Assessment Methods

July 15: Pathway Structure

July 29: Ethics, Accountability, and Safeguards

August 12: Finalization and Implementation Plan

The taskforce agreed to adjust the June 17 agenda to focus on:

Defining Alternative Pathways and Identifying Minimum Acceptable Standards for Alternative Pathway Interpreter Licensure.

3. Discussion

A. Purpose of Alternative Pathways

The taskforce discussed that the purpose of establishing Alternative Pathways is to provide additional methods for qualified individuals to obtain interpreter licensure while maintaining public protection and effective communication for the DDBHH.

The alternative pathway is intended to provide a licensure option for individuals who can demonstrate professional competency substantially equivalent to certification but who do not meet the requirements for provisional or general licensure.

Alternative Pathways recognize that professional competency may be demonstrated through a combination of:

- Education
- Professional experience
- Training
- Assessment
- Demonstrated performance

The discussion emphasized that Alternative Pathways are intended primarily for individuals who did not originally meet certification requirements but have demonstrated competence through years of professional practice. And rather than certification alone.

B. Addressing Interpreter Shortages

The taskforce discussed Maryland's ongoing shortage of qualified interpreters, particularly in:

- Rural communities
- Medical settings
- Mental health settings
- Legal settings
- Educational settings
- DeafBlind services
- Tactile and Protactile interpreting
- Languages other than ASL

Members agreed that Alternative Pathways could help expand the pool of qualified interpreters while maintaining professional standards. Reminder, will have speciality interpreters TBD by SBSLI.

The taskforce also acknowledged that recommendations must continue moving forward despite occasional member absences.

Consensus was reached that:

- Members attending scheduled meetings will discuss and develop recommendations.
- Members who are unable to attend may provide additional input by email when appropriate.

Final recommendations will be presented to SBSLI for review and formal action.

C. Taskforce Meeting Participation

Members discussed whether meetings should remain closed to non-members.

Several members expressed that the taskforce has developed a comfortable working environment and preferred limiting attendance to taskforce members.

One member suggested inviting representatives from the Governor's Office to observe and answer questions.

The group noted that:

SBSLI representatives are already participating.

GODDBHH staff are present to support the taskforce and report updates as appropriate.

Meeting notes and supporting documents remain available for review.

Additional observers would increase logistical requirements, including interpreter coordination.

The taskforce agreed to continue meeting as a working group.

D. Defining Alternative Pathways

Members discussed characteristics of individuals who may benefit from Alternative Pathways.

Examples included:

Retired interpreters wishing to continue practicing

Highly skilled interpreters unable to obtain certification because of:

Test anxiety

Financial hardship

Family obligations

Other life circumstances

Members emphasized that certification alone should not determine competency, reminder.

The discussion focused on recognizing individuals with demonstrated professional competence and extensive experience serving the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities.

The taskforce also discussed the importance of preserving high standards while providing equitable methods for demonstrating competency.

E. Possible Alternative Pathway Components

The taskforce explored several possible requirements, including:

Education

Potential educational requirements discussed included:

- 10 hours of Continuing Professional Competency (CPC)
- 10 hours of Ethics
- 10 hours of Deaf Culture
- ASL Linguistics
- Additional coursework to be determined

Members generally agreed that ASL Linguistics should be included.

Written Assessment

Discussion included requiring applicants to successfully complete a written examination, such as:

- RID Written Examination
- Ethics examination

Members recognized that written testing may continue to present barriers for some applicants because of:

- Test anxiety
- Financial limitations

Previous discussions regarding state-funded testing opportunities were referenced.

It was noted that earlier discussions concluded that sufficient state funding was not currently available.

Performance Assessment

Several performance evaluation options were discussed.

Suggestions included:

- Establishing review panels that meet three to four times annually.
- Developing eligibility criteria for panel members.
- Using experienced licensed interpreters to evaluate candidates.

Considering letters of recommendation from Deaf community members.
Establishing mentorship requirements for Alternative Pathway licensees.

Members also discussed using a model similar to the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI), where candidates submit recorded performance samples for evaluation.

The taskforce acknowledged that the ASLPI primarily evaluates ASL language proficiency rather than interpreting performance.

Additional Considerations

Additional ideas discussed included:

Providing structured Alternative Pathway training.
Exploring the future use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a supplemental review tool.
Continuing discussions with other state agencies regarding interpreter assessment models.
Allowing Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing consumers greater input regarding interpreter selection when appropriate.

The taskforce reiterated:

The goal is not to lower standards but to provide equitable methods for demonstrating professional competence.

4. Future Discussion Topics

The next meeting will focus on:

Performance Requirements for Alternative Pathways

Members were encouraged to research performance assessment models before the next meeting.

Additional future topics include:

Evidence and Assessment Methods
Pathway Structure
Ethics
Accountability
Safeguards
Finalization and Implementation Plan

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Time: 7:30 PM EST

The taskforce will continue meeting on a bi-weekly schedule.

Meeting formats, edits, and future agendas will be adjusted as needed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately **9:00 PM**.