

# Hard of Hearing Task Force Meeting Draft Minutes for May 8, 2026 Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 11:01 a.m.

**Host:** Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (ACDHH)

**Voting Members Present Attendees (Task Force Members):** Ena Brown, Fred De Worth, Cynthia Amerman, Roz Seibold, Harvey Smith, Liz Booth, and Barry Forst

**ACDHH Staff Present:** Reena Banerjee, Michele Michaels, Christy Abrams

**Special Guest:** Dr. Clifford Olson

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## I. Call to Order and Introductions

- The meeting was called to order by Christy Abrams, Hard of Hearing Specialist, at 9:00 a.m.
- Christy reviewed the meeting’s accessibility accommodations, including ASL interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART).
- Roll call confirmed the attendance of all Task Force members.

## II. Review and Approval of Minutes (Action Item)

- **Motion:** Liz Booth moved to approve the minutes from the February 20th meeting as recorded.
- **Second:** Cynthia Amerman seconded the motion.
- **Outcome:** The minutes were approved.

## III. Arizona Auracast Initiative agenda item moved as noted below

## IV. Community Relations Manager Report (Reena Banerjee)

- Reena Banerjee was introduced in her new role as Community Relations Manager.
- **Community Tour:** ACDHH is planning a community tour across Arizona between August and December to promote its services and programs.

- **50th Anniversary:** ACDHH will celebrate its 50th anniversary in August 2027.
- **Partnerships & Grants:**
  - The agency continues an effective partnership with the Arizona Burn Foundation (ABF).
  - The City of Tucson received a grant to install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, expanding on projects running in Phoenix, Surprise, and Prescott.
- Members are encouraged to share their community involvement for potential spotlight features via ACDHH's eNews and social media.
- **Comment:** Fred De Worth complimented the quality of the ACDHH newsletter.

## V. Hard of Hearing Specialist Report (Christy Abrams)

- Christy highlighted the importance of connecting the state's 1.3 million hard of hearing people and the value of organizations like ALOHA and HLAA chapters.
- **Educational Presentations:** The team offers virtual and in-person educational presentations across Arizona.
- **Presentation Examples (Since Last Meeting):**
  - Presented with Reena Banerjee to ombudsman staff and volunteers for Area Agency on Aging Region 1.
  - Presented on living well with hearing loss to the Saddlebrooke Hearing Discussion Group (over 50 attendees). [Saddlebrooke Hearing Discussion Group](#)
  - Presented to students at the Phoenix State School for the Deaf with Deaf Specialist Kim Minard and Christy also presented for 3 classes of students studying American Sign Language at the University of Arizona.
- **Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project (HHAP):**
  - The Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project (HHAP) partners with ASU, U of A, and NAU Speech and Hearing clinics to help low-income adults obtain no cost hearing aids and Aural Rehabilitation.
  - Demand for HHAP is high: 32 new inquiries in March and 35 in April.
- **Comments:**
  - Christy encouraged referrals to HHAP.
  - Roz Seibold suggested creating awareness materials (e.g., a checklist) for hearing aid safety during hospital stays. Christy recommended the Hearing Loss Association of America Communication Access Plan (CAP) checklist. [Health Care Communication Access Plan - Hearing Loss Association of America](#)

## VI. Hard of Hearing Program Manager Report (Michele Michaels)

- **Arizona Relay Service (711):** Michele Michaels is managing the day-to-day operations of the federally mandated program and plans to broaden its visibility through new radio and television ads within the next year.
- **National Speech Language Hearing Month (May):** Task Force members were encouraged to share ideas on how the agency can celebrate this month.
- **Program Development:**
  - Reena Banerjee is managing the development of an **Ambassador Program** (volunteers) to amplify ACDHH's message.
  - The agency is revamping the **Age of Access** website, which focuses on services and information for older Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind adults.
- **ADRD Plan:** Michele is assisting the Arizona Department of Health Services with the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) state plan, noting that hearing loss is a modifiable risk factor for dementia.
- **Outreach Focus:** The HHAP, now approaching five years, will focus its outreach efforts on Northern and Western Arizona, including tribal communities.
- **Comment:** Roz Seibold suggested promoting the "Dangerous Decibels" project in places like pediatricians' offices and hospitals to reach young mothers. Michele agreed to invite Latrina (Family Services Specialist) to the next meeting to address this.

## VII. ALOHA (Adult Loss of Hearing Association) Report (Cynthia Amerman)

- **Membership:** The main group is growing, meeting in person and via Zoom.
- **Leadership:** Pat, the acting president, is age 89 and is seeking a replacement.
- **Action Item:** Cynthia requested a list of ACDHH presentations to help plan future ALOHA meetings, including inviting Reena Banerjee to discuss her new role.

## III moved here. Arizona Auracast Initiative (Action Item)

- Dr. Clifford Olson discussed **Auracast Broadcast Audio** (a new Bluetooth LE Audio feature) as a low-cost, high-quality public accessibility alternative to hearing loops, accessible to both hearing aid users and normal-hearing individuals via consumer earbuds.
- **Initiative Update:** Dr. Cliff is in preliminary talks with Gammage Auditorium and the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) and will conduct a pilot program at Gammage next month.
- **Goal:** To make Arizona a global capital for Auracast accessibility.

- **Discussion:** Roz Seibold and Cynthia Amerman stressed concern about manufacturers dropping telecoils prematurely and the need to maintain existing loop system accessibility during the transition.
- **Motion:** Roz Seibold moved that ACDHH act on an Auracast initiative for the state of Arizona.
- **Second:** Fred De Worth seconded the motion.
- **Vote:** The motion passed unanimously, with the caveat that the agency continues to advocate for the continued use and availability of hearing loops and telecoils.

### VIII. HLAA Chapter and Task Force Member Reports

- **HLAA East Valley (Roz Seibold for Ron Tallman):** Reported high attendance for recent meetings. Announced that Ron received the Chandler Volunteer Recognition Longevity Award.
- **HLAA West Valley (Fred De Worth):** Announced Fred De Worth will be taking over as president. Asked about the Commission's role in advocating for assisted listening technology in new schools and public library systems.

### IX. Employment (Harvey Smith):

- Shared that the job search period has increased from one month to three months. Urged employers to overcome ageism, as more seniors are returning to the labor pool. Announced the successful Exceptional Worker Summit at ASU West.

### X. Arts & Culture Venue Access (Ena Brown):

- Ena shared great success stories in advocating for listening devices at venues (e.g., Diana Ross at Wild Horse Pass). The Chandler Arts Center is looking into Auracast during upcoming renovations. The Wild Horse Pass venue told her "You lit a fire"! Ena's glad to light fires and encourage everyone to keep advocating as there are often miscommunications and confusing messages, it can be a real uphill battle. Keep advocating!

### XI. Adjournment

- **Next Meeting:** August 21st.
- The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.