

**New Jersey Department of Human Services
Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Communication and Language Access Services**

I. Purpose and Intent

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) intends to provide grant funding to New Jersey counties to promote communication and language access for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents of all ages. This Request for Letters of Interest (this RLI) seeks to assist counties in providing communication and language access to their residents by providing funding for the following initiatives:

- Installation of hearing induction loops. [Hearing Loop Systems: A Guide to Best Practice for Service Providers](#)
- Installation of public videophones and associated connectivity costs.
- Expanding access to sign language interpreter services. [NJ Interpreter Services](#)
- Expanding access to captioning services. [NJ Captioning Services](#)
- Development and/or provision of community/educational/or healthcare-related programming or services accessible in American Sign Language (ASL).

Interested counties must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) that details which entities/areas in their respective counties will be recipients of the funding and for which purpose according to the initiatives listed above. Selected awardees will be fully responsible for coordinating and distributing grant funds awarded through this RLI as designated in their LOI.

Importantly, the funding for these grants will come from the Division of Disability Services' Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) Program. In alignment with IHC principles, these funds will support local governments' efforts to support the health and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities in the communities where they live. County LOIs must include an explanation of how the funding will be used to improve the health and/or social determinants of health for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents.

Funds for interpreter and captioning services will prioritize innovative pilot programs with a goal of self-sustainability after expiration of the grant and respondents that show hardship in meeting American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for communication and language access. Potential areas to consider for the funding opportunities include libraries, local community centers, independent living centers, community theatres, non-profit organizations focused on health equity, county jails, municipal and county government agencies, parent-run organizations/disability groups and county courthouses.

Counties are encouraged to consider multiple initiatives (for example, the county library may be interested in installing a public videophone, hearing induction loop, and in developing programs accessible in ASL; parent-run/local community organizations may need expansion of interpreter services).

Funds for development of programming, services, or content accessible in ASL can be for either children or adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.

The following summarizes the anticipated RLI timeline:

- May 2, 2025 Release of RLI
- May 16, 2025 DHS prospective Respondent presentation
- May 23, 2025 Deadline for submission of questions
- May 30, 2025 Deadline for receipt of Letters of Interest (LOI)
- June 6, 2025 Announcement of selected awardee(s)

II. Background and Population Served

Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents face communication and language barriers in accessing county and community-based services, critical health/emergency information, public services, and public educational programming. The mission of DDHH is to provide education, advocacy and direct services to eliminate barriers and promote increased accessibility to programs, services, and information routinely available to the state's general population.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people with disabilities face higher risks of experiencing health disparities than people without disabilities (<https://www.cdc.gov/disabilityand-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html>). A health disparity is a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion. People with disabilities experience health disparities due to inequitable access to social and structural determinants of health. The CDC defines the social determinants of health as the "conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes and risks"

(<https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>).

It groups social determinants of health into five categories:

- Economic Stability—When people cannot afford healthy foods, health care, and housing, their health and wellbeing are negatively impacted.
- Education Access and Quality —People with access to quality and higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier and live longer.

- Health Care Access and Quality—Access to quality, affordable, welcoming, and supportive healthcare is a critical element for ensuring good health and wellbeing.
- Neighborhood and Built Environment – The neighborhood that one lives in has a major impact on their health, including but not limited to safe, clean, and vibrant communities, healthy and affordable housing, access to diverse modes of travel, and access to recreational amenities.
- Social and Community – The social and community context that a person lives in, such as whether they face discrimination, social isolation or exclusion from the processes that result in decisions that affect their lives, can have significant impacts on health and wellbeing.

This RLI seeks to promote the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing residents in their county's services and programs to promote health and positively impact the social and structural determinants of deaf communities. Deaf individuals who use sign language rely on access to videophones for telecommunications as it allows individuals to communicate on the phone using sign language.

Additionally, providing educational content in ASL or providing ASL interpreters to interpret content that is made available to the general public is a way to include deaf and hard of hearing residents in programs and services that are routinely available to everyone else. Captioning services are a helpful way to provide access to content to those who have a hearing loss and whose primary language is English.

Captioning services are provided by Communication Access Real-time Transcription (CART) professionals. DDHH maintains a directory of sign language interpreters and CART providers which can be found here: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/>.

III. Funding Availability

Total funding available through this RLI is \$250,000. Counties could potentially receive a maximum award of up to \$70,000. DHS has sole discretion on the final award amount(s). Amount of award will vary according to each county's proposed needs. All respondents are advised that the award(s) may be conditional upon final contract and budget negotiation.

IV. Respondent Requirements

1. Respondents must be a county government agency in New Jersey and LOIs can be submitted on behalf of the County Human Service Director, County Executive, County Commissioner, or other relevant position.
2. All respondents must discuss and get input from the entities within their County on what areas they can provide communication and language access to deaf and hard of hearing residents.
3. All successful awardees will be required to submit a quarterly progress report to DDHH.
4. Successful awardees will be required to undergo the Division's deaf and hard of hearing sensitivity training prior to receiving funding.
5. Successful awardees will be required to post public signage where hearing induction loops have been installed and/or where sign language interpreting and captioning services are available.

6. Successful awardees will be required to organize at least one public relations effort, ex: ribbon cutting ceremony to showcase the product and/or press release recognizing DDHH's funding for this effort and its availability to New Jersey residents.
7. Products and promotional materials arising from this funding will be required to include DDHH logo, examples including but not limited to brochures, flyers, and signage for loops and sign language interpreting and captioning services.
8. Sign language interpreters and captionists must be retained through DDHH's online directory.
<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/>
9. By receiving grant funds awardees agree to have their efforts published.
10. Successful awardees must get DDHH approval in selecting vendors to provide services. Vendors should have primary experience providing ASL and deaf and hard of hearing services.

Please note that all costs encompassed by funds under this RLI must be incurred no later than June 30, 2026.

V. LOI Requirements

LOIs must be limited to five (5) pages and must be single-spaced with one (1") inch margins, normal character spacing that is not condensed, and no smaller than twelve (12) point Arial, Courier New or Times New Roman font and include the information specified below. DDHH will not consider any information submitted beyond the page limit.

The following information must be submitted in a LOI to be considered for funding under this RLI:

- A. All LOIs must be on County (or County agency) letterhead.
- B. Proposed estimated Budget
- C. Narrative

A. Project Description

Detail the following:

- Describe the areas of need, project goals, and objectives, in the County in terms of communication and language access for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents.
 - Detail how the County will allocate funding to the identified entities/areas.

B. Implementation Timeline

Please provide a proposed project timeline starting from notification of award anticipated on June 6, 2025.

C. Estimated Budget

VI. Submission Instructions

The LOIs should be combined into a single PDF document. Respondents should email the combined single PDF document to Melissa.Spirito@dhs.nj.gov no later than **5:00 pm ET on May 30, 2025**.