



Alaska Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Council
Board of Directors Annual Statewide Meeting Minutes
October 18th, 2025

1. All to Order:

The ADC Board of Directors Annual Statewide meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM on October 18th, 2025, at the UAA in the Student Union's Lyla Richard's Conference room by Interim President, Duane Mayes

2. Roll Call:

PRESENT:

Board Members:

- Interim President Duane Mayes
- Vice President Clara Baldwin
- Treasurer Sean Gordon*
- Secretary Evelyn Ooten
- Member at Large Jamie Kokoszka
- Member at Large Karen Strache
- Member at Large Shawn Schramski
- Member at Large Kathryn Widener*
- Member at Large Kristeena Brinkley*

Board Members Absent:

- Member at Large Markus Porch

ADC Members/Guests:

- ADC Member Geraldine Klapak
- ADC Member Hillarie Gossett
- ADC Member Natasha Haskins
- ADC Member Nathaniel Palacios
- ADC Member Brittany Stuckert
- ADC Member Courtney Westmann
- ADC Member Gena Graves
- ADC Member Marjorie Lambert
- ADC Member Kate Bodaley
- ADC Member Amy Bobich
- ADC Member Dana McNavish
- ADC Member Tracy Pifer



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- ADC Member John Miranda
 - ADC Member Sharon Miranda
 - ADC Member Rich Saville*
 - ADC Member Galen Graves*
 - ADC Member Bridgette Barton*
 - ADC Member Jillian Schroeder*
-
- Guest Nikki Larson
 - Guest Andree Howard
 - Guest Alyssa LaComb-Brown
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- Interpreter Janelle Caspersen
 - Interpreter Natalie Page
 - Interpreter Gina Ashman

* Zoom Video Conference Attendees

3. Quorum Present? Yes.

4. Proceedings:

Approved the Meeting Minutes: **Motion 10.18.2025** – Member at Large Jamie Kokoszka moved to accept the Meeting Minutes of 8/9/2025, seconded by Vice President Clara Baldwin. The vote passed.

Approval of the Agenda: **Motion 10.18.2025** – Member at Large Karen Stache moved to accept the agenda, seconded by Secretary Evelyn Ooten. The vote passed.

Elections for President, Treasurer, and 2 board seats: **Motion 10.18.2025** – VP Clara was taking over the presidential election due to a conflict of interest with the current interim president. VP Clara moved that the Alaska Deaf Council open the floor to nominations for the President, seconded by Member at Large Shawn Schramski. Secretary Evelyn nominated Interim President Duane Mayes, who he accepted, and delivered a three-minute presentation. ADC Members voted in favor to accept Duane Mayes as the President, and the Oath of the Office was administered by Vice President Clara Baldwin.

President Duane moved that the Alaska Deaf Council open the floor to nominations for the Treasurer, seconded by Member at Large Shawn. Vice President Clara nominated



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Treasurer Gordon to serve a second two-year term; Treasurer Sean Gordon declined the nomination. Secretary Ooten nominated ADC Member Hillarie Gossett, who accepted. Due to inconsistent language within the bylaws regarding the election process. Vice President Baldwin requested a pause in the nomination process, and it was recommended to suspend the treasurer vote. ADC Member Courtney Westmann motioned to suspend nominations for treasurer, seconded by Tracy Pifer. The motion passed unanimously.

President Duane moved to open nominations for two vacant board seats, seconded by Secretary Ooten. Board Member at Large Karen Strache nominated Natasha Haskins and Courtney Westmann, both of whom accepted and made three-minute presentations. ADC Members voted in favor of accepting Natasha and Courtney as new board members. Vice President Baldwin motioned to hold the appointment of the two new board members until the ADC meeting in December 2025 to allow the board time to correct the bylaws section on the election process. This was seconded by ADC Member Gena Graves, and the motion passed unanimously.

c. Executive Reports:

President's Report:

Introduction

As the Interim President of the Alaska Deaf Council, I am honored to present this report following our last board meeting, which took place on August 9, 2025. Our council remains dedicated to serving Alaskans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened. Our advocacy work is guided by a strong commitment to our mission, ensuring that the voices and needs of our diverse community are heard and addressed.

Board Composition

Our board currently consists of 11 dedicated members, representing a range of experiences and perspectives. Among us are individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and a parent of a deaf daughter. This diversity strengthens our council and ensures we are responsive to the unique challenges faced by our community.

Mission-Driven Advocacy

As we move forward, it is imperative that we remain focused on our mission. Advocacy for Alaskans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened is at the core of



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everything we do. Our efforts must be strategic, inclusive, and persistent to achieve meaningful changes in areas such as access to education, employment, healthcare, and community resources.

Recent Activities

- **Board Meeting:** The board last met on August 9, 2025, where we discussed ongoing projects, community needs, and future plans.
- **Community Engagement:** Our members have continued outreach efforts to connect with individuals and families across Alaska, ensuring their voices are represented in our advocacy work.
- **Resource Development:** We are in the process of identifying and developing resources that will benefit our members and the broader community.

Ongoing and Future Efforts

The Alaska Deaf Council remains committed to expanding our advocacy and outreach to meet the evolving needs of our community. One of our key initiatives will be the work of the ADHOC Hard of Hearing Committee, which we will actively engage with members and stakeholders to address gaps in services and representation. The committee will start meeting regularly and, recognizing its critical role, the board is exploring steps to transition it into a permanent standing committee. This move will help ensure that the unique perspectives and needs of hard of hearing individuals are consistently prioritized within the council's operations.

In collaboration with the fundraising committee, the board has identified six top priorities for the coming year. The foremost priority is securing qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for all board meetings and major events to guarantee full accessibility and meaningful participation for every board member. Additional priorities include: 1) developing sustainable funding streams for council initiatives, 2) expanding educational resources for members and the wider community, 3) investing in leadership training for board and committee members, 4) enhancing digital communications to improve outreach, and 5) strengthening community partnerships to amplify advocacy efforts.

Legislative advocacy remains a cornerstone of our mission. The council is actively working with Alaska legislators to advance House Bill 39 and Senate Bill 08, known as the deaf education bill of rights. Our goal is to secure passage of these critical measures during the spring 2026 legislative session, ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing students receive



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equitable educational opportunities. In addition, we are supporting Senate Bill 178, which seeks to improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities ages 0-3, recognizing the importance of timely support for young children and their families.

Our commitment to community engagement has also led to the formation of a new ADHOC parent committee. This group is dedicated to increasing outreach and support for parents of deaf children, providing resources, information, and a platform for shared experiences.

The council continues to strengthen its partnerships with other advocacy organizations across Alaska, working collaboratively to maximize our collective impact and advocate for policies that promote accessibility and inclusion.

Through these ongoing and future efforts, the Alaska Deaf Council reaffirms its dedication to advancing the rights and well-being of all Alaskans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened. We look forward to building on these initiatives in the months ahead, guided by our mission and the voices of our community.

Goals Moving Forward

1. Strengthen partnerships with local organizations and state agencies to improve access and services.
2. Increase public awareness of the needs and rights of deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened individuals.
3. Expand board training and capacity-building to ensure effective governance and advocacy.
4. Continue to listen to and amplify the voices of our community members.

Conclusion

I am grateful for the dedication and passion of our board members and the support of our community. Together, we must remain mission-driven in our advocacy, working tirelessly to create a more inclusive and accessible future for all Alaskans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened.

Vice President's Report:

University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Situation: While personal opinions are certainly valued, as an organization, it is essential to coordinate with the Education and Outreach committee and collaborate with AD members Natasha, Nathaniel, Kahtryn, Mary, and Eve. This unified approach ensures our advocacy is both strategic and effective.



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1. Legislative Advocacy: We continue to support the ADC legislative and outreach policy committee in its efforts to secure passage of HD 39 and SB 8 in 2026. It is important to note that November 2026 marks an election year for both the Senate and House, which could bring new representatives. If leadership changes, we may face the challenge of reintroducing and re-establishing our priorities with new legislators. This underscores the importance of building strong relationships and maintaining consistent outreach.
2. Matsu Families: Parents of DHH children in MSBSD expressed concerns last spring following a new RFP and transition to a new agency that reportedly lacked qualified staff. In response, we met with Laura Allen - representing various stakeholders including AKSD, ADC, and the parent committee - to ensure that parents feel supported and heard. The initial meeting last summer was positive, with Laura Allen appearing receptive, yet no concrete actions followed. A second meeting was scheduled but was later canceled and has yet to be rescheduled.
3. Outreach and ILP Collaboration: Mary Putnam highlighted the need for ADC to enhance outreach and dialogue with ILP. Currently, services and funding are distributed by regions (ER, Valley < Anchorage), with varying expertise among workers that often does not address the unique needs of DHH children, especially in rural areas. There are ongoing concerns about school readiness and language access for these children. Although ADC supported ILP's request for a \$5.7 million increase to address travel challenges, legislative response was mixed, and tangible collaboration remains pending. Following this meeting, we plan to initiate conversations to formalize our partnership. Passage of HB39 and SB8 is critical for implementing Lead K. While 27 states have enacted the Language Milestone Accountability Bill, the model started in California is not fully suited to Alaska's cultural and community context. We advocate for solutions that are culturally appropriate and trauma-informed, particularly for Alaska Native communities, ensuring they are tailored to our state's distinct needs.

Legislative and Policy Committee Report (Duane Mayes)

Session #34 Priorities: The committee's foremost objective this session has been to secure a \$100,000 increase for the Deaf navigator program, recognizing its vital role in supporting Alaskans who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. We have also prioritized advancing HB39-sponsored by Representative Allard from Eagle River with strong bipartisan backing from 12 co-educational outcomes for children in our community.

ILP Funding Challenges: Despite our advocacy, the governor issued a \$5.7 million veto to the Infant Learning Program (ILP) funding increase. We are actively working to educate the



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governor's staff on the importance of these resources and are committed to continued dialogue to prevent similar vetoes in the future.

Legislative Advocacy: Our committee has built strong relationships with key legislators and remains engaged in the legislative process in Juneau. The breadth of bipartisan support for HB39 and SB8 reflects growing awareness of our priorities. We continue to monitor and contribute to discussions on interpreter certification laws, drawing on successful models from other states and seeking input from local agencies to inform potential updates here in Alaska.

Next Steps: As we address current session goals, we will engage members and stakeholders to help shape future priorities. The committee's ongoing presence in Juneau ensures that the needs and voices of our community remain at the forefront of policy decisions.

Treasurer's Report:

Income Statement (Statement of Activities)

Category	Amount (USD)
Revenue	
Donations & Contributions	
Not much activity, but the revenue +\$10,302.89	
Total Revenue	\$10,302.89
Expenses	
Web Bluehost.com	\$163.07
Softball ASLized Fee	\$412.50
Total Expenses	\$575.57
Net Income (Loss)	\$9,727.32

A few things need to be adjusted, and we will have more information about net income or loss if we receive any refunds or additional income. We are also looking into the possibility of reopening scuba lessons in the future. While this year has not seen a lot of activity, we are hopeful that moving forward, we will be able to increase both the budget and income, ideally seeking growth next year.

Secretary's Report:

This year, the record keeping process has greatly improved. When I assumed the secretary position, there was no binder or formal files to be passed along, but now we are prepared and



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organized for December. Back in August, I wanted to officially introduce the board members who joined Karen and Shawn on our team. Karen serves as our parents representative; her daughter was born Deaf at 18 months and communicates using both spoken languages and ASL. Karen brings valuable financial experience to the board and has been working remotely for quite some time. She tends to be more introverted and shy, but her dedication is evident.

Shawn has been a part of the ADC since 1996. Due to health concerns, he may become less active and step away from his role, though he hopes to return if his health improves. Shawn has Deaf siblings and works closely with Markus, remaining deeply involved with ADC initiatives. Recently, Shawn got married and welcomed a new baby into his family.

Special thanks go to Alyssa, Nikki, and Andree for their ongoing support with board meetings and technology assistance, even when tech support wasn't needed. Their help has made our meetings run more smoothly.

d. Standing Committee Reports:

Education & Outreach Committee (Clara Baldwin Chair):

Covered above in the Vice President's report.

Public Policy & Legislative (Duane Mayes, Chair):

The Legislative Committee for the Alaska Deaf Council has not formally met in the last several months. Members of the committee are Clara Baldwin, Jillian Schroeder, Duane Mayes, and Karen Strache. Chair Mayes will be reaching out to add two more ADC members to this committee. Although we have not met formally, there has been quite a bit of activity happening from one-on-one mtgs with legislators, tours of the Alaska State School for the Deaf, and presentations to other advocacy boards. Our priorities for the upcoming legislative session is to pass the Deaf Education Bill of Rights, house bill 39 & senate bill 08. Our second priority is to partner with the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education to pass senate bill 178 to change the eligibility requirements and increase funding by \$5.7 million. In summary, we will be traveling to Juneau at critical moments to advocate for the passage of both bills in 2026

Budget & Finance (Hillarie Gossett, Chair):

No report at this time.

Youth Membership (TBD, Chair):

Duane introducing ADC Member Gena Graves



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Ad Hoc – Recreational & Sports (Markus Porch, Chair):

The ASLized team recently completed their season with 2 wins and 4 losses. A few new players joined the team, but they are still actively seeking additional participants or supporters to join as cheerleaders. If you are interested in playing or cheering, please consider reaching out to the committee for more information.

Bylaws (TBD, Chair):

No report at this time.

Nominating (TBD, Chair):

No report at this time.

Fundraising (TBD, Chair):

Covered above in the President's report

Ad Hoc – Board Policy Manual (TBD, Chair):

No report at this time.

Ad Hoc – Hard of Hearing (Jamie Kokoszka, Chair):

No report at this time

Ad Hoc – Parent (Karen Strache, Chair):

The ADC Parent Committee was approved as an ad hoc committee in May 2025 and is scheduled to become an official standing committee following the statewide ADC meeting in October 2025. A formal charter for the committee has been drafted and is currently under review.

Since May, ADC members Duane Mayes, Karen Strache, and Clara Baldwin, have engaged in several productive meetings with key stakeholders. These include Amanda Armagost, the designated parent representative, families from the Mat-Su region, and Laura Allen, Director of Special Education for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD).

Ongoing quarterly meetings have been scheduled with these families and MSBSD leadership to ensure consistent communication and collaboration. The next of these meetings is set for October 29, 2025.

We are pleased to announce that the first official meeting of the ADC Parent Committee is scheduled for November 1, 2026, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held in the Hope Community Resources conference room. We look forward to



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beginning this important work in a formal capacity and continuing to support families and strengthen partnerships across the state.

Ad Hoc – Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) (TBA, Chair):

No report at this time

Ad Hoc – Alaska History of Deaf People (TBA, Chair):

No report at this time

5. Old Business: - no old business was discussed

6. New Business:

- The fundraising Committee has been established and has convened three times to discuss planning and strategy for upcoming initiatives. Notes from these meetings are forthcoming and will be shared with members soon.
- The DHH Ad Hoc Committee has expressed its intention to transition into a standing committee to enhance its ongoing impact and continuity. Member at Large Jamie made a motion for the committee to be established as a permanent standing committee, and Karen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Member at Large Jamie made a motion for the ADC Parent Committee to become a permanent stand committee ADC Member Natasha seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by the board.
- ADC Member Courtney moved that the Ad Hoc Committee dedicated to Alaska History of Deaf People formalize efforts to capture and document this history on the organization's website. Secretary Evelyn seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Upcoming Regular Meeting Date:

The ADC Board of Directions Meeting is scheduled for December 13th, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Valley Imaging Center Conference Room, 3765 E Blue Lupin, Wasilla, AK 99654. This meeting will be held in person and a Zoom component available for remote participation.

Announcements:

AANO will be posted soon for the upcoming year, and the next calendar will be released in December. Additionally, there is an important announcement for an event on November



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8th from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Eye Tooth on King St, located behind Global Credit Union. All members are strongly encouraged to attend.

ADC Member Natasha moved to close the meeting, and seconded by ADC Member Courtney. The vote passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm:

Submit by:

Secretary Evelyn Ooten