

## Chapter 216

(Senate Bill 79)

AN ACT concerning

### Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Responsibilities

FOR the purpose of altering the responsibilities of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; altering the name and the membership of the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; defining a certain term; and generally relating to the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
Article – State Government  
Section 9–2401, 9–2403, and 9–2404  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2009 Replacement Volume)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

### Article – State Government

9–2401.

- (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.
- (b) “Council” means the Maryland Advisory Council [for] ON Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals.
- (c) (1) “Deaf and hard of hearing individuals” means those residents of Maryland who have a partial or complete loss of hearing.  
(2) “Deaf and hard of hearing individuals” includes **INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE** [the] deaf, [the] hard of hearing, **DEAFBLIND**, and [the] late–deafened.  
(3) **“DEAFBLIND” MEANS THOSE RESIDENTS OF MARYLAND WHO HAVE CONCOMITANT VISION AND HEARING LOSS.**
- (d) “Director” means the Director of the Office.
- (e) “Office” means the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

9-2403.

(a) The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State.

(b) The responsibilities of the Office shall include:

(1) providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) improving access to communication and to existing services and programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals as appropriate;

(4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services[, including the acquisition and distribution of visual smoke detectors];

(6) developing a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(8) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to educational, health, and social opportunities;

(9) working with private organizations, the federal government, and other units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(10) working to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(11) providing a network through which services provided by State and federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled; and

(12) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(c) The Office shall hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to receive public comments on:

(1) the quality of State services and programs affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) the functions and operations of the Office; and

(3) any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including those specified in subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The Office shall:

(1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local, and other public services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

9-2404.

(a) There is a Maryland Advisory Council [for] **ON** the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

(b) (1) The Council consists of [16] **18** members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(2) Of the [16] **18** Council members, at least five of the members shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(c) Of the [16] **18** Council members:

(1) one shall be the State Superintendent or a designee from the State Department of Education;

(2) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;

(3) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Human Resources;

(4) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Transportation;

(5) one shall be from the Human Relations Commission;

(6) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation;

(7) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Housing and Community Development;

(8) one shall be the Superintendent or a designee from the Maryland School for the Deaf; [and]

**(9) ONE SHALL BE THE SECRETARY OR A DESIGNEE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING; AND**

**[(9)] (10) [eight] NINE** shall be from the general public.

(d) (1) The **[(eight)] NINE** members from the general public shall be chosen from different geographical areas of the State.

(2) Of the **[(eight)] NINE** members from the general public:

(i) five shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(ii) one shall be a private citizen with special knowledge or expertise relating to services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(iii) one shall be a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child; [and]

(iv) one shall be from a private agency providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; **AND**

**(V) ONE SHALL BE A PERSON WITH SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERTISE RELATING TO SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAFBLIND.**

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2010.

**Approved by the Governor, May 4, 2010.**