



Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.

Open Letter to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Community  
August 4, 2018

Melvin Walker, President  
Joey Trapani, CEO

RID was founded in 1964 through collaboration between the Deaf and interpreting communities, who together developed a central registry of sign language interpreters, established to ensure the prompt access to quality interpreting services. That origin has shaped our mission as an organization: “To advocate for best practices in interpreting, professional development for practitioners, and for the highest standards in the provision of interpreting services for diverse users of languages that are signed or spoken.” RID has grown as an organization, both in membership and in scope over the past 54 years.

We have grown into more than a registry, but our central mission has remained the same. However, an unintended consequence of this growth has been a gradual division between the interpreting and Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities. We understand and acknowledge this feedback from the community and see that many of the concerns expressed by the greater Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind community are mirrored within the interpreting community.

Some of the systems we are responsible for have contributed to this division and have impeded our ability to succeed. We recognize that the pursuit of our mission has been hindered by weaknesses in our Certification and Ethical Practices Systems (among others), and know that as stewards of these systems, we are responsible when they do not meet the needs of the communities we serve.

We apologize for the direct impact these weaknesses have had on the DHHDB community and the interpreting profession. Our aim is to reaffirm RID’s roots, and pull the DHHDB and interpreting communities closer together by effectively engaging community stakeholders in the improvement of our programs. We acknowledge that the scope of involvement of the DHHDB communities must broaden. We must work harder to incorporate DHHDB partnerships, feedback, and collaboration, and we regret not making a stronger push towards bridging the recent divide. When Deaf people thrive, interpreters will also thrive.

Here at RID we have several projects underway, including the review of both the Code of Professional Conduct and the Ethical Practices System. We want these, as well as every program we administer, to reflect and anticipate the needs and trends of the communities we serve. We cannot be successful in this without active participation from our stakeholders. We strive to see our organizational and individual relationships restored, and our communities united in supporting the linguistic rights of DHHDB people.

RID needs systemic change, and we acknowledge that we cannot achieve this change without the investment of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind community in our collective advancement. RID Leadership, including the Board of Directors and CEO, seek to rebuild not just the relationship between the leading organizations of these communities, but also the underlying trust between the two communities.

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We see several opportunities for collaboration, and welcome ongoing conversation between NAD and RID aimed toward the benefit of the Deaf community and the interpreting profession that serves them. The Board of Directors, upon receiving extensive membership feedback, has provided direction to RID

through a new Strategic Plan. We will continue to develop detailed action steps for this Strategic Plan, and today I'd like to share the five main components:

1. Organizational Effectiveness: RID will ensure organizational viability through efficient and effective governance and operations.
2. Certification: RID will achieve a fully functional and reliable certification "system".
3. Membership Support & Engagement: RID will deliver an exceptional member experience.
4. Advancement of the Profession: RID will promote the growth, recognition, awareness, and interests of the profession through education and advocacy.
5. Fiscal Stability & Sustainability: RID will enhance the fiscal stability and sustainability of the organization through responsible stewardship and accountability.

We recognize that action is necessary now. RID is committed to a larger systemic and strategic change, and we are currently implementing important projects that provide key resources to the interpreting community and call for collaboration from each consumer group we serve.

1. Provisional Deaf Interpreter credential: Work on the Provisional Deaf Interpreter credential is underway. This system is designed to credential Deaf Interpreters while a final test is under development, and we are pleased to announce that it will be available to applicants in Fall 2018.
2. White Papers: Sharing of best practices is vital to the success of an organization and a profession. The conversion of RID's Standard Practice Papers to White Papers began in Fall 2017, and the need for volunteers in this work is continual. Deaf consumer participation in White Paper Development is crucial to ensure that best practices from both the interpreter and consumer point of view are documented and shared.
3. Committees, Councils, and Task Forces: Committees, Councils and Task Forces are important advisory groups which greatly contribute to the work of RID - they assist in developing our policy, writing guidelines, and determining key priorities for RID.

RID needs each of our Committees, Councils, and Task Forces to have DHHDB representation, and we renew the call to the DHHDB community to join these standing groups.

- Audit Committee
- Certification Committee
- Elections Committee
- Finance Committee
- National Bylaws Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Pro Bono Ad Hoc Committee
- Professional Development Committee

Parallel to these Committees and Task Forces are three councils that serve as advisory groups to the Board.

- Deaf Advisory Council
- Diversity Council
- Council of Elders

More information about each of these opportunities for engagement will be available and disseminated to the public this summer. We invite, welcome, and encourage your participation. The strength of our organization is in your representation, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration.