



To HCAD Community,

Last September 26, 2017, several representatives of Howard County Association of the Deaf (HCAD) attended County Executive Allan Kittleman's 3rd quarterly Town Hall to hear about health care concerns.

Howard County General Hospital (HCGH) President Steve Snelgrove was also there to address these issues. Inevitably, many questions came from Howard County's Deaf community regarding the quality and availability of certified interpreters in the hospital. After the Town Hall ended, several names and email addresses were exchanged between the HCGH staff and officers of HCAD.

As a result of that town hall exchange, HCAD representatives were invited to meet with the staff of both HCGH and Johns Hopkins Health System on Saturday, December 2nd. The staff consisted of HCGH President Steven Snelgrove, Vice-President James Page, who is the Chief Diversity Officer, HCGH Chief of Staff David Nitkin, and HCGH Nursing Administration Senior Director Nancy Smith.

We discussed several main concerns such as the use of VRI during traumatic health incidents, death, and hospice, etc. We explained why VRI is not always effective, not only for those who are Deaf but those with vision problems. We raised concerns regarding the new interpreting agency who are unfamiliar with the Deaf needs and their quality and availability of sign language interpreters on-site. While the hospital experience can be traumatic, the burden of having disqualified interpreters leads more worrisome, confusion and anxiety.

HCAD's mission is to ensure that our Deaf and hard of hearing constituents go in the hospital without a worry about having communication access. We want to make sure there will be top-of-the-line access at the hospital and that there will be no more challenges to requests for communication access equal to those of our hearing citizens.

In order to make the above happen, we need your assistance. We need to know both good and bad experiences you have at the HCGH between December 1, 2017 and on:

- 1) Date of your hospital stay (either ER or doctor's visit at the hospital);
- 2) Did you request for on-site interpreting services and if so, did they comply your request?
- 3) Do you have the names of the nurses/medical staff who took your request for interpreting services?
- 4) Was VRI provided while waiting for an on-site interpreter to show up?
- 5) How long did you wait for an on-site interpreter to show up?

The next time you go to the hospital (and we hope that won't ever happen but if it does...), please be sure to follow the next three steps if you find you can't get interpreting services as you requested:

- 1) Ask for a Nurse Supervisor;
- 2) If a Nurse Supervisor is not available or does not meet the patient's expectations, contact the Patient Relations officer during daytime hours. The officer represents patients;
- 3) After hours, (after 7pm) or on weekends, contact the on-site supervisor. The on-site supervisor is always on call particularly during evenings and there is one for each area of the hospital.

Please be sure to let us know about your hospital visit as soon as possible, so that we can share the information with the HCGH staff. We can't improve services if we don't know what you're experiencing. Your assistance will be a huge help for the Deaf community as a whole. We hope that one day there will be no more struggles.

Communication access is a fundamental human right for all of us.