

OAD Historical Facts

Ohio Association of the Deaf, Inc (OAD) 1940
Formerly named the Ohio Deaf Motorist Association until 1959

Firsts: Founders: Dick Petkovich, David Wilson, and Robert Lankenau

In 1940, the name of organization had been named the Ohio Deaf Motorist Association along with the Ohio Federation of Organizations Serving the Deaf, including ten districts, merged to create Ohio Association of the Deaf, Inc. in 1961. National Association of the Deaf Conference was founded in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1880. NAD met again for celebrating its 100th founding anniversary in Cincinnati, Ohio. In April 29, 2006, Tri-State Gala hosted in honor of the 125th Anniversary of the NAD by the Indiana Association of the Deaf, Kentucky Association of the Deaf and the Ohio Association of the Deaf. There was also an honor in memory of our beloved Elizabeth Cookie Williams.

Prior to the 1960's, deaf people did not have complete access to human services in the state of OHIO. Human service providers often displayed a lack of understanding or insensitivity toward communication difficulties and perceived deafness as having negative psycho-social ramifications. To alleviate this situation, the Ohio Association of the Deaf, a statewide consumer organization, engaged in a joint project with the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission in 1965, to establish a program of rehabilitation services for the deaf, which was subsequently housed within the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. The project was federally funded, with matching money provided by the Ohio Association of the Deaf. This was the first time that a consumer organization provided the base money for a federal grant. The project was implemented in 1966; at which time a specialist was hired to work for the Ohio Rehabilitation Commission in the area of deafness. The project has since grown, with over 20 vocational rehabilitation counselors working with the deaf throughout the state and serving more than three times as many people than in 1965. The Ohio Rehabilitation Service Commission has served as and continues to be the prime advocacy agency for deaf people. It also has contributed toward planning and development of every specialized program for the deaf in Ohio, including the Central Ohio Psychiatric Hospital Deaf Unit, the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf, and Columbus Technical Institute.

Once vocational rehabilitation counselors were available to work with the deaf, deaf consumers constantly approached them for assistance in dealing with non-vocational rehabilitation needs. These dilemmas led to a study which resulted in the establishment of community counseling and referral centers for the deaf. These centers assist deaf people with non-vocational rehabilitation needs and are staffed with professionals. with expertise in deafness, who are highly skilled in manual communication.

Since the establishment of the Community Centers for the Deaf, the Ohio Association of the Deaf has continued to work in the interest of Ohio's deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind citizens. Representatives of OAD continue to participate in many capacities with various organizations, such as: Early Infant Screening Committee; Ohio State University Medical Center; the Ohio Department of Health; the Ohio Department of Motor Vehicles; the Supreme Court of Ohio, and Telecommunications Relay Services