



MDCR Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Reveals Results of Year-Long Census and Needs Assessment for Community

FAST FACTS:

- Census reveals 7.4 percent of Michiganders identify as Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing – nearly double previous estimates for the state.
- Needs Assessment reports significant barriers in accessing public events including education and government meetings.
- Assessment exposes significant disparities in pay between the general population and Deaf or DeafBlind individuals with the same educational attainment.

LANSING, MI--Results of a year-long [census estimate and needs assessment](#) of Michiganders in the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (D/DB/HH) communities reveals a larger population than previously estimated, as well as key concerns related to healthcare, access to government services and education and significant disparities in pay equity from the general population.

[Not Without Us](#) is a combined census and needs assessment of the D/DB/HH communities. The needs assessment was launched online in September of 2018 and solicited responses until midnight Dec. 31, 2018.

The census portion of the project revealed an estimated 7.4 percent of Michiganders identify as Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing -- almost double the findings the 2017 American Community Survey, which was 4 percent.

“The census reveals that the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing community has been dramatically under-estimated in Michigan,” said Annie Urasky, director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (DODDBHH). “Such significant discrepancies lead to under-resourcing and under-representation throughout Michigan’s public and cultural life. With this new data, we will be able to more effectively work to solve systemic problems facing these communities.”

The census estimate was created through a telephone survey of 3,600 Michigan residents and included cellphones. The estimate also looked at past estimates and population data, and identified where larger populations of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities live. This, in turn, allowed more concentrated outreach into those communities.

The *Not Without Us* assessment also revealed that significant majorities of D/DB/HH community members perceived low availability for captioning at public events or spaces including government meetings, K-12 education, work, events such as concerts and in colleges.

Of those who responded to the survey, 72 percent perceived a low availability for captioning at events and work meetings. Seventy percent held the same perception for K-12 education environments, while 69 percent had that perception for public meetings. Sixty-one percent reported a perception of captioning at conferences as low. Half of the respondents reported post-secondary educational institutions had low availability for captioning.

Those findings, Urasky said, show a significant set of barriers to participate in the educational, social and civic aspects of Michigan communities.

“This data tells us we have to do a better job of making Michigan’s communities more accessible and help them communicate that accessibility more readily,” said Urasky. “We will be working to assess the underlying cause of the problem and develop plans with our partners across the state to address it.”

While the survey revealed significant educational attainment among D/DB/HH individuals in the state, it also showed a dramatic income disparity for some in the Deaf or DeafBlind communities when compared to Michiganders with the same education.

Statewide, 17 percent of Michiganders have a Bachelor’s degree. The median individual earning for a Michigan resident with a Bachelor’s degree is between \$55,920 and \$63,534.

While 17 percent of all Michiganders who identify as Deaf as well as those who identified as Hard of Hearing, and 12 percent of Michiganders who identify as DeafBlind have Bachelor’s degrees, the average household income is significantly lower. Twenty-three percent of persons who identified as Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing had an income of \$25,000 to \$34,999; 18 percent reported an income of \$15,000 to \$24,999; a further 10 percent reported an income of \$10,000 to \$14,999 and 18 percent reported an income of less than \$10,000 a year.

The results of the *Not Without Us* census and needs assessment survey were released as part of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Legislative Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day. The legislative day also honors Deaf Awareness Month, as proclaimed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

“This new data will enable us to work more effectively in identifying, addressing and overcoming the barriers to success in Michigan for people who identify as Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing,” said Mary Engelman, interim executive director of MDCR. “The data shows Michigan has work to do to fulfill its promise of being a welcoming place for everyone.”

Not Without Us was launched in September 2018 and featured an online survey asking hundreds of questions about the life experiences of people who identify as Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing. These questions explored their experiences with accessing healthcare, government meetings and other aspects of life. The *Not Without Us* census and survey were funded by a \$250,000 budget assignment in FY 2017/18, and a one-time special appropriation of \$150,000 from the legislature in FY 2018/2019.

Access a PDF of the full *Not Without Us* report [here](#).

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