

New England Center for the Deaf, Inc.

“Communicating a better future”

FY2026 Annual Report





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History of NECD, Inc.

New England Center for the Deaf, Inc. originated in 2011 as a result of the tragic loss of a young man in the Deaf community. This loss illuminated the need for comprehensive Deaf –appropriate social services, and thus NECD, Inc. was formed. The founding members, Tracy Knight and Joseph Sisk recruited the Board and thus New England Center for the Deaf, Inc. was created.

Since the formation of the board and the Incorporation in March of 2011, we have moved forward in our development. In 2012 we were granted our 501 C 3, Federal recognition as a non-profit agency. Our Board currently consists of 3 members, all of whom have been involved since the inception of NECD, Inc. We had a fourth Board Member for much of this year, but she had to resign due to personal; reasons. Our Board members are very committed to our mission and come to us from a variety of backgrounds. All board members bring specific strengths and benefits to the Board and to the agency.

We are very proud to introduce the current NECD, Inc. Board of Directors.:

Board of Directors

Tracy Knight: Tracy is the CEO and President and co-founder of NECD, Inc. Tracy has her BSW from the University of Saint Joseph (formerly St. Joseph College) and her MSW from Fordham University. She recently earned her Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) credential. Tracy is the mother of a Deaf son. Tracy has been connected with the Deaf communities in Missouri, Kansas and Connecticut for almost 35 years. During this time, Tracy served on the Region 5 Council of Developmental Disabilities, the Southwest Missouri Task force on Autism and is a former member of the Parent Advisory Committee at the American School for the Deaf. She is currently working as a Therapist at the Clarke Center in Missouri.

Joseph Sisk: Joe is the Chairman/COO and a co-founder of NECD, Inc. Joe has his BA in Psychology from Bard College and his MA in Psychology from The New School for Social Research. He has subsequently earned his License as a Professional Counselor, and he is a Nationally Certified Counselor and holds his Specialty Certificate in Substance Abuse. He is also a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional. Joe has over 35 years of experience in the field of human services. In addition to his responsibilities at NECD, Inc., Joe currently works full-time as a Regional Director, Director of Contract Compliance and Director of Parenting Services at another social service agency in Connecticut.



Christopher Knight, Jr.: Chris (Cj) is a Director on the NECD, Inc. board. He is Deaf and is fluent in American Sign Language. After growing up in Missouri and being educated in the mainstream through elementary school, his family moved to Kansas where he attended the Kansas State School for the Deaf. He graduated from middle school at KSD. Chris came to CT where he attended the American School for the Deaf and graduated with his high school diploma. Since graduation he has obtained his veterinary assistant certificate from Tunxis Community College.

Former Board Member, Ashley Melendez was with NECD for much of this past fiscal year:

Ashley identifies as a Latina woman with a hearing impairment. She was born and raised in Connecticut and graduated from Wethersfield High School. Her passion for helping others and giving back to her community has been a driving force throughout her life, especially during challenging times in her young adult years. Ashley is the only member of her family with a hearing impairment. Ashley's cultural volunteer work has allowed her to actively engage in community service throughout the Greater New Haven area in Connecticut, promoting and celebrating the Puerto Rican culture. During her college years, she attended Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in upstate New York and Gateway Community College in New Haven, Connecticut to pursue her career in psychology and business administration. Eager to complete her education, she plans to continue her studies. We are sorry to have had to say goodbye to Ashley as an individual dedicated to our mission and values.

The New England Center for the Deaf, Inc. fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. This report is reflective of the activities of the agency and reports on the income and spending during this time period.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This year we were focused on addressing the NECD, Inc. Strategic Plan. We continued to distribute the first responder's Communication Card. This is an 11" X 17" laminated card with which will assist first responders (Police Officers, Ambulance and EMT workers, etc.) to assist our first responders to become aware and to better communicate with individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing during emergency situations. We are very excited to have distributed these cards (with a dry erase marker included) to first responders throughout all of the 6 New England states and New York.

This year one of our regular donors asked for a packet of cards and markers to distribute to their local first responders. It is wonderful to see that our donors are becoming active to assist us in reaching our mission and to support individuals who are Deaf in their areas.



We are proud to be partnering with first responders and other medical providers throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine Rhode Island and even New York. There was no charge to the recipients for these cards. The cost was absorbed by the agency and made possible through your donations to help those who help individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) throughout New England.

We also updated our strategic plan for the next three years. Our strategic plan includes the following goals:

- **Advocacy and Community Awareness:** This goal addresses specifically the provision of two trainings a year as requested by constituents, on the Deaf Community, Deaf Experience and Deaf Culture. This training includes education and discussion on Deaf stereotypes, abilities, Deaf culture and communication.
- **Vocational Services:** We will work to develop our vocational services by recruiting employers who are willing and able to work with individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and to then match them up with candidates for employment. We will also assist Deaf and HoH individuals in job ready skills including resume building and interview skills and assist with interview clothes as needed.
- **Funding:** We will increase our funding by 30% each year through continued annual appeals and seeking out new funding through appropriate and relevant grants.
- **Board expansion:** We will increase the Board of Directors' membership by identifying and recruiting new Directors who are committed to the mission and values of the agency and who are able to commit the time and energy to being an active member of a growing organization.

Trainings

The Boston, Massachusetts EMS contacted us again requesting that we facilitate two more trainings for their incoming new classes of EMT trainees. These trainings occurred on December 29, 2025, and June 29, 2026. We were more than happy to oblige. We presented a PowerPoint presentation on Understanding the Deaf Community. The discussions were designed to assist the new EMS recruits to better understand the experience and abilities of the Deaf individuals thereby reducing the stigma through resolving myths that often accompanies those who are Deaf. We also included in this training a discussion to better understand the strong cultural identities of individuals who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. We ended the presentation with a discussion of communication; how can we better communicate with those people who are Deaf and we reviewed the Communication Cards that we previously provided. These cards are



not meant to make communication seamless with people who are Deaf or those unable to verbally communicate due to an emergency situation. However, the use of the cards communicates respect for those who have difficulty speaking and hearing and shows a genuine attempt to communicate with all individuals. These cards and the commitment of the Boston EMS to train their staff will also serve to improve community relationships.

ADVOCACY

This year we provided the following assistance:

We were connected with a single mother of three children who had just experienced a fire at her residence and was displaced currently living in a hotel. We were able to assist them with food baskets for Thanksgiving as well as Christmas. We also provided gifts to the family to help them get through this challenging time.

NECD also provided support and resources for the family to find new housing. They did subsequently find a nice house to rent in a safe and resource-filled area in Connecticut.

Additionally, we assisted this single mother to connect with a new audiologist as her hearing aid needed replacement and she did not currently have an audiologist that accepted her insurance to assist her with replacing the hearing aid.

FUNDRAISING

NECD, Inc. has completed our annual appeal letter writing campaign. As always, we thank our loyal, generous and supportive private contributors. See page 7 of this report for the list of donors and the Financial page on page 8 of this report for our FY26 financial report.

NECD, Inc. also is an annual recipient of a donation from the Zach's Family Foundation and continues to receive support from them. This year we were provided with an increase in their donation, and we appreciate their commitment to and support of our agency and our clients.

NECD also applied for 4 grants this year to assist us during the next fiscal year to continue to support the Deaf community. We are awaiting decisions, but we are optimistic. With these grants, we will be able to assist more students, and do so more substantially, those who are entering college or trade schools to reach their educational and professional goals.



e-NCOUNTERS

We are committed to maintaining our web site, twitter account and Facebook page. Our web site is maintained and is current with news and agency activities.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Joseph H. Weingart Memorial Scholarship

This year, NECD received, again, a record number of applicants for all over New England this year for the Joseph H. Weingart memorial scholarship. We were able to select the top 5 candidates and provide them with assistance for the 2026-2027 school year. Three of the awardees came from Connecticut at the American School for the Deaf. One awardee came from Portland High School in Portland, ME and one from Bedford High School in Bedford, NH. One of the awardees had to decline the scholarship due to a change in plans. Of the remaining four awardees, one will be attending Keene State College majoring in Exercise Science. The other three awardees will all be attending Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technology Institute for the Deaf (RIT/NTID) majoring in Computer Science, Engineering and Robotic engineering. We congratulate all the scholarship recipients this year. Feel free to visit our web site to meet each of the recipients.



New England Center for the Deaf, Inc.

2025-2026 Contributors

The Board of Directors and Management of NECD, Inc. wishes to thank all of those people and businesses, large and small, who have helped us with financial contributions allowing us to assist individuals and families. Without your generosity, we would not have been able to facilitate the building of, and the continued life of NECD, Inc. Thank you all!

Friends **\$1-\$99**

Father Joseph Looney, Bloomfield, CT
Dominick “Fred” Reisen, Middlefield, NY

Sponsors **\$100-\$499**

Nevin and Julie Christensen, Flamig Farm of West Simsbury, CT
Leanne Dillian, Myrtle Beach, SC
Daniel and Kristen King of Woofer Audio/Video Electronics, Cumberland ME
Dick and Helen Weingart, Chaplin, CT

Donors **\$500-\$999**

Gerald and Anne Levinson, Melrose, MA

Patrons **\$1000-\$4999**

Benefactors **\$5000-\$9999**

Endowers **\$10,000+**

Corporate Sponsorship

Foundations that supported NECD this year:

Zachs Family Foundation



Financials

FY 2025-2026

Beginning balance:	\$8188.58	
	REVENUE	EXPENSES
Personal Donations	\$1275	
Corporate donations		
Big Y (Community Bag Project)	\$	
Stop & Shop (CBP – Simsbury 0522)	\$	
Big Y Cares Blooms event	\$	
Town Fair Tire Foundation Grant	\$	
Zachs Family Foundation	\$200	
Administrative expenses		
Secretary of State (annual filing)		\$ 50.00
Supplies		\$ 56.25
Postal costs		
PO Box renewal		\$ 276.00
Stamps/Mailings		\$ 11.05
Other administrative		
Agency Cell Phone		\$ 424.92
Microsoft 365		\$138.24
Web Site expenses		
Domain		\$ 17.95
Web site (2 years through Dec 2026)		\$
Promotional items		
Client Services:		
Holiday baskets		\$225.41
Holiday Gifts		\$475.29
Other client needs (housewarming gifts)		\$64.75
Joseph H. Weingart Memorial Scholarship (25/26 School year)		\$2750.00
TOTALS:	\$9663.58	\$4486.50
Ending balance:	\$5177.08	