



**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Justice Programs

*Office for Civil Rights*

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*Washington, D.C. 20531*

**Sent by Certified Mail (Return Receipt Requested) and Email**

September 2, 2026



Re: Administrative Closure of Investigation  
[REDACTED] v. Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff's Office (23-OCR-0233)

Dear [REDACTED]

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), through the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office for Civil Rights (OCR), is notifying you that we are administratively closing the investigation against the Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff's Office (TPSO) as resolved.

On September 26, 2023, OCR initiated an investigation of TPSO after receiving an administrative complaint (Complaint) from [REDACTED] (Complainant), who is deaf, alleging that TPSO discriminated against him based on disability when it failed to provide him with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter while he was detained at the Tangipahoa Parish Jail (Jail) pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), 29 U.S.C. § 794, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12132, and their implementing regulations at 28 C.F.R. pt. 35; pt. 42, subpt. G.

Specifically, Complainant alleged that TPSO denied him an ASL interpreter and that staff would sometimes communicate with him in writing, though he struggled to understand this mode of communication. Complainant also noted that he met with the Warden at the Jail on two occasions to request an ASL interpreter, but that the Warden never arranged for one. In addition, Complainant reported that he had challenges making phone calls while at the Jail and had to rely on other detained individuals since the video chat feature on the TPSO provided tablet failed to work properly most of the time.

OCR has authority to investigate disability discrimination complaints under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 42.205(c)(1); 28 C.F.R. pt. 35. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against a qualified individual with a disability by a recipient of federal funding.

29 U.S.C. § 794. Title II of the ADA provides that no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of a disability, be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity. 42 U.S.C. § 12132. TPSO is a recipient of federal funding from DOJ's OJP and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, and TPSO is also a public entity as defined in Title II of the ADA. For these reasons, TPSO must comply with Section 504, Title II of the ADA, and DOJ implementing regulations for both laws.

Under Section 504, a recipient of federal financial assistance shall ensure that it is effectively communicating with individuals with hearing impairments. 28 C.F.R. § 42.503(e). Similarly, Title II of the ADA requires a public entity to take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. 28 C.F.R. § 35.160(a)(1). In doing so, a public entity is required to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program or activity. 28 C.F.R. § 35.160(b)(1).

During OCR's investigation, OCR reviewed information provided by Complainant and TPSO, including TPSO's policies and practices regarding communicating with deaf or hard of hearing individuals detained at the Jail and associated training provided to staff.

TPSO contended that Jail staff communicated with Complainant through the exchange of written notes and texts on a tablet, and that staff believed they were effectively communicating with him. TPSO further asserted that it has no records of Complainant ever asking for an ASL interpreter, the Warden does not recall meeting with Complainant about his desire for an interpreter, and Complainant never informed staff that the video feature on his tablet was malfunctioning. According to TPSO, had Complainant requested an interpreter, it would have provided one.

While TPSO informed OCR that it did not have a written policy regarding communicating with hearing impaired individuals, TPSO asserted that it maintained relationships with several organizations that provided TPSO with qualified interpreters upon request, and it trained staff on communicating with deaf or hard of hearing individuals by periodically sending out emails instructing them to contact TPSO Communications to obtain the services of a certified sign language interpreter whenever interacting with a deaf individual.

With OCR's technical assistance, TPSO developed *Communicating with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, a department-wide policy in 2026 to establish procedures that ensure effective communication with individuals who are hearing impaired. The policy contains a section specifically addressing communicating with deaf or hard of hearing individuals detained at the Jail, and states that Jail staff shall provide reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids to ensure effective communication including certified interpreters (remote or in-person), written communication, and Video Relay Service equipped on tablets issued to deaf or hard of hearing individuals. The policy requires Jail staff to screen individuals for a hearing impairment during intake and document the hearing impairment and any required accommodations in the Jail's record management system, along with any requests for auxiliary aids or interpreter services and accommodations provided by TPSO. The policy notes that the type of auxiliary aid required for effective communication will depend on an individual's usual method of communication and the

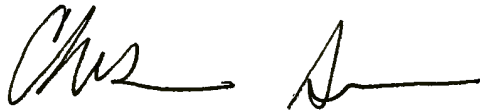
nature, importance, and duration of the communication, and that certified interpreters shall be used when necessary to ensure effective communication during significant interactions such as classification interviews, disciplinary proceedings, grievance hearings, medical consultations, investigative interviews, and other matters involving substantial rights or consequences. TPSO trains staff on the policy and includes the policy in employees' annual policy review and acknowledgement.

Here, while TPSO and Complainant dispute whether written communication was sufficient to be effective, there were likely interactions during Complainant's detention where a qualified interpreter was necessary to ensure effective communication. However, based on TPSO's development of its department-wide policy, OCR finds that there is sufficient evidence showing that TPSO has taken steps since the initiation of our investigation to ensure it effectively communicates with deaf or hard of hearing individuals, such as Complainant, detained at the Jail. Therefore, OCR is administratively closing its investigation of TPSO as resolved and will take no further action.

The closure of this investigation is limited to the specific facts of the matter and neither precludes DOJ from taking additional actions to evaluate TPSO's compliance with any of the laws that DOJ enforces nor affects TPSO's obligation to comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations. Federal law protects individuals from retaliation for providing information to OCR or otherwise engaging with OCR's investigation.

Thank you for your cooperation during this investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris' followed by a stylized surname.

Christina W. Smith  
Director  
Office for Civil Rights  
Office of Justice Programs  
U.S. Department of Justice