

Michigan Deaf Association, Inc.

Bylaws

*Organized in 1887
Incorporated in 1911 under the laws of State of Michigan*

A non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

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Last amended on November 16, 2025 at the 55th Biennial Conference in Troy, Michigan

Article I – Name

Section 1: The name of this non-profit organization is “Michigan Deaf Association, Inc.” (MDA)

Section 2: This Association, formerly known as Michigan Association of the Deaf, Inc. (MAD) was organized in the City of Flint, Genesee County in 1887 and incorporated in the State of Michigan in 1911.

Section 3: This Association shall be a cooperating member with the National Association of the Deaf, also known as the NAD.

Section 4: This Association is classified as a non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article II - Mission

The mission of the Michigan Deaf Association is to preserve, protect, and promote the linguistic, human, and civil rights of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals in the state of Michigan.

Article III - Goals

The goals of the Association are to advocate for, promote, and achieve the following:

- A. Effective communication between Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing residents;
- B. Equal rights to the same opportunities, access, and independence as hearing individuals;
- C. The preservation of American Sign Language and Deaf culture; and
- D. The provision of social, advocacy, and educational services for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people.

Article IV – Registered Address

The registered address of the Association shall be the address of the Association’s Home Office or the home residence of the Association President.

Article V – Term

The existence of this corporation is perpetual.

Article VI – Membership

Section 1: Individual

- A. Membership in this Association is open to all individuals. The Michigan Deaf Association does not discriminate based on any protected characteristic, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
- B. Voting privileges extend to all general sessions, special sessions, and the Biennial Conference, unless otherwise specified.
- C. Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing members are eligible to hold elected office. Hearing members are not eligible for elected office but may serve in appointed positions on committees.

Section 2: Organization Affiliates

- A. Any organization in the State of Michigan supporting the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing community and this Association's mission and goals may affiliate with this Association.
- B. Affiliated organization's President or a representative shall have voice and vote privileges at the Council of Representatives, but may not have any vote or authority on the Executive Board.
- C. The affiliated organization shall pay special annual dues set forth by the Executive Board.

Section 3: Graduates of Secondary Education Program

Each year, graduates of any secondary educational program for the Deaf in the State of Michigan are entitled to a year's free active membership in the Association.

Article VII – Officers

Section 1: Title and Term

- A. The Officers of this Association shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations Coordinator. These five (5) duly-elected officers shall serve as an Executive Board.
- B. Their terms of office shall be from conference to conference. (2 years)
- C. The immediate past President shall serve as an advisor to the newly elected board for one year.

Section 2: Election Procedure

- A. The election of officers and regional representatives shall take place at the Biennial Conference of this Association during odd-numbered years.
- B. A member is eligible to hold an office in this Association if he/she/they, 1) is a resident of the State of Michigan, 2) is in good standing, and 3) has been a member for at least one year. A former member who wishes to return to the Association and be eligible to hold an office shall pay current year and last year's dues. "Good standing" is defined as a member who has paid all required dues and fees, is actively involved in the association and the local Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing community, adheres to the organization's bylaws and code of conduct, and is not currently under suspension or disciplinary action.

Section 3: Transition Period

Newly elected officers shall be sworn in on the same day as the election. However, they shall not assume office until thirty (30) days after the election to allow for a formal transition period. During this thirty (30) day period:

- A. The outgoing officers shall continue to conduct the Association's day-to-day business but shall not initiate any new programs, projects, or policy decisions without consulting the newly elected officers.
- B. The newly elected officers shall participate in all meetings and business discussions conducted by the outgoing Board during the transition period in a collaborative, non-voting advisory role.
- C. Both outgoing and incoming officers shall work together to ensure a smooth and informed transfer of responsibilities, including the handover of physical and digital assets, and the reporting of new registered agents to the appropriate legal authorities, all within the thirty (30) day transition period.

Section 4: Vacancy of Office

- A. In the event of death or resignation of a President, the Vice-President shall assume the presidency and appoint another person from the Executive Board to the position of Vice-President, subject to approval of the Executive Board.
- B. In the event of the death or resignation of an officer other than the President, the President may appoint another person to fulfil the vacancy, subject to approval of the Executive Board.
- C. If a regional representative is not elected for a specific region or resigns, the President may appoint another individual, subject to the approval of the Executive Board.
- D. An officer who desires to resign from office shall submit a written resignation to the Executive Board and it shall be read at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Section 5: Administrative Services

The Executive Board may contract staff to perform administrative services, including an Executive Director, provided the Association has the financial capacity to do so. These staff members report to the Executive Board and do not have voting privileges on the Executive Board, the Council of Representatives, or at the Biennial Conference.

Article VIII – Regional Representatives

Section 1: Title and Term

- A. The Association shall have two (2) representatives from each of four regions (refer to the map and list of counties), for a total of eight (8) representatives. Any redistricting changes may be determined at the Biennial Conference and take effect at the next election cycle.
- B. Their term shall be from conference to conference. (2 years)

Article IX – Council of Representatives

Section 1: Roles and Membership

- A. This Association shall have a Council of Representatives, consisting of five (5) duly elected officers, regional representatives, and representatives from affiliated organizations.
- B. The Council of Representatives advises the Executive Board on community priorities, assists with programming and fundraising, and supports organizational goals, policies, and procedures.
- C. The Council of Representatives may support the Executive Board by serving on ad-hoc committees.

Article X – Meetings

Section 1: Board Meeting

The business of the Executive Board shall be conducted at any time and place within the State of Michigan, whenever a duly called meeting of its officers is convened. The Executive Board shall meet at least two (2) to three (3) times per year.

Section 2: Council of Representatives

The business of the Council of Representatives may be conducted at any time and place within the State of Michigan. A quorum shall consist of two-thirds (2/3) of the Regional Representatives, and either the President or Vice President must preside over the meeting. The number of meetings is determined by the members of the Council of Representatives.

Section 3: Membership Participation

Members may attend the Executive Board's open sessions, General Sessions, Council of Representatives meetings, and the Biennial Conference. The Executive Board shall provide updates by arranging at least two (2) general sessions for members, during which members may have voice and voting privileges, in addition to those granted at the Biennial Conference.

Section 4: Special Sessions

- A. The Executive Board may arrange special sessions to address urgent matters, provided that all officers receive at least forty-eight (48) hours' notice. A quorum with a minimum of three (3) officers or 2/3 of the Executive Board must be present. This special session may be open or closed depending on the nature of subject being handled.
- B. Members may request a Special Session by submitting a petition signed by at least ten (10) members outside of the Executive Board.

Section 5: The Biennial Conference shall take place during odd-numbered year.

Article XI – Home Office

Section 1: Authorization

The Association may maintain a home office on such location and in such quarters as shall be designated by the Executive Board. The designated location shall remain in effect until changed by vote of the Executive Board.

Section 2: Executive Director

Applications for the position of Executive Director shall be screened and contracted by the Executive Board to oversee administrative services. The Executive Director shall be responsible for maintaining the home office in accordance with the policies, guidelines, and financial limits established by the Executive Board. The Executive Director shall report directly to the Executive Board.

Article XII – Amendments

The Bylaws of this Association shall be amended only at the Biennial Conferences by affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members presented. Such proposed changes must be written and distributed to members sixty (60) days prior to the Conference.

Article XIII – Dissolution

In the event this Association decides by majority vote at duly-called Conference to dissolve itself, the Association shall decide by majority vote to distribute all tangible goods and assets included reserve and special funds to any organization or program that focus on Deaf people in the State of Michigan. The recipients of Association assets shall be tax exempt within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal Tax Code.

Dates of Amendments

1985 – Kalamazoo
1993 – Flint
1995 – Troy
1999 – Mt. Pleasant
2001 – Troy
2005 – Pontiac
2007 – Kalamazoo
2009 – Bay City
2011 – Lansing
2013 – Kalamazoo
2025 – Troy