



Statewide Educational Programs and Support Services for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

State Plan
Proposed - December 2025



This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document. For comments regarding this document contact nde.guidance@nebraska.gov

It is the policy of the Nebraska Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, age, national origin or genetic information in its education programs, administration, policies, employment or other agency programs.

Table of Contents

The Nebraska Model	3
Preface.....	4
Introduction	5
Guiding Principles for all Programs Serving Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing	6
School Districts Role.....	7
Regional Program's Role.....	8
State Role.....	9-10

The Nebraska Model



PREFACE

This plan was developed to support the concept of regional programs and cooperative relationships with the school districts, educational service units and families. In this document, the term Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) is used inclusively to represent individuals across a range of hearing levels and cultural identities. The plan will:

- Maximize resources and services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Provide a network of support and services that will serve as the state infrastructure to link programs together and assist in the enhancement of a child's educational program;
- Contain costs now in order to assure future funding;
- Support the belief that children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing benefit from specialized educational and social opportunities with hearing and deaf or hard of hearing peers;
- Continue to provide state leadership and support for all educational programs in the full continuum of placement options for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.



INTRODUCTION

Appropriate and quality learning opportunities should exist for all children. The education of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing requires specialized programs, and appropriately certified personnel with effective communication skills.

Appropriate and quality learning experiences for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing should accommodate not only their disabilities, but should also recognize and build on their unique strengths and learning styles.

The communication and language environments for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing must be varied and rich. The individual communication and language needs of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing may present special challenges during naturally occurring interactions. All communication modes and languages are to be provided for and respected, whether oral/aural language or manual language, whether American Sign Language or English signing systems, regardless of the type or use of hearing assistive technology (i.e. cochlear implant, hearing aids, etc.).

Early identification followed by timely and appropriate intervention must form a safety net of support around all programs and services if quality and access are to be made a reality for all. The state system is a distinct yet fluid network of connected options that allow students to move to appropriate programs and receive services as needs and circumstances change. All of which are determined by the student's IFSP or IEP team.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ALL PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

1. Individuals closest to the child, especially the parents, in consultation with professionals and in some instances with the child, are in the best position to make educational program decisions for the child.
 - a. Parents of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing should be aware of all the options available to their children.
 - b. Decisions making in planning for the education of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing must include professionals trained in the education of children (Birth - 21) who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
 - c. Parent education and personnel development are essential components for meeting the needs of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

2. Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing must have access to free appropriate public education
 - a. Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing should have quality learning opportunities and have the opportunity to meet the same educational requirements and standards as all children.
 - b. Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing need special accommodations and/or considerations, to access and benefit from an educational program.
 - c. Opportunities should be provided in an environment with peers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and peers with typical hearing as identified by IEP/IFSP teams.

3. A continuum of educational services will be available for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
 - a. Educational Placement is determined by a child's IFSP or IEP team based on the individual's educational needs.
 - b. Regional programs may facilitate exploration of placement options upon request from the local district and or IFSP or IEP team.
 - c. Strong partnerships among parents, school districts, service providers and agencies are vital to meet the needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - d. Professional providing services to children who are deaf of hard of hearing must be trained and skilled in this discipline.
 - e. The state will provide resources, technical assistance, residential services along with financial, information and professional support to assist parents, schools and communities in the decision-making process for the education of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ROLE

School districts will assure that all children Birth through 21 (B-21) years of age, who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which includes special education and related services to meet their unique needs.

1. School districts have the responsibility to ensure students have an equal opportunity to participate in school and receive FAPE consisting of regular or special education and related services designed to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students.
2. School districts will assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21) are educated with other children, who are both hearing and Deaf or Hard of Hearing in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
3. School districts have the responsibility to ensure students have full access to language, communication and to their educational environment.
4. School districts will assure the full continuum of placement options as described in the individuals with Disabilities Education Act are available for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21).
5. School districts shall meet the standards of Nebraska Department of Education Rule 51, Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs and Rule 52, Regulations and standards for Early Intervention Services.
6. Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing will receive accommodations, to the extent appropriate, in order to make meaningful progress from their educational program.



REGIONAL PROGRAM'S ROLE

The Regional Programs will work cooperatively to maximize state and local resources for the enhancement of the education of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21) and who are receiving early intervention (IFSP) or special education (IEP) services.

1. The Regional Programs serve as the statewide networking system among students, parents, professionals, and the Nebraska Department of Education and other agencies serving students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21).
2. The Regional Programs will provide summer social and educational opportunities for Deaf or Hard of Hearing students with Deaf or Hard of Hearing peers and role models.
3. The Regional Programs will encourage family involvement in educational and social activities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
4. Each Regional Program will serve as a resource to families, students, professionals, and school districts.
5. Each Regional Program will plan and provide social and educational opportunities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21) to interact with others in a language barrier-free environment.
6. Each Regional Program will promote excellence and access for all children (B-21) in Nebraska who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
7. Each Regional Program will build upon existing services, promote cooperative agreements among service providers, and support the ongoing development of outreach services.
8. Each Regional Program will assist in offering professional development and training opportunities to enhance the skills of individuals working with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (B-21).
9. Each regional program will assist in exploring options for and availability of specialized technological equipment for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
10. Each Regional Program will serve as a clearinghouse of specialized materials and information relating to individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
11. Each Regional Program will provide technical assistance and assist the Nebraska Department of Education with statewide initiatives.
12. Each Regional Program will collect and maintain statistical information regarding children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing within their region.
13. Each Regional Program will identify and utilize appropriate Deaf and Hard of Hearing role models for educational and social opportunities.

STATE ROLE

The State Coordinator will serve as the primary contact for the Nebraska Department of Education in providing technical assistance and information on behalf of children, families, professionals, and other interested agencies and individuals seeking information relating to the education of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

1. The State Coordinator will support the *Guiding Principles for All Programs Serving Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*.
2. The State Coordinator will serve as a liaison between the Regional Programs, other stakeholder groups and the Nebraska Department of Education.
3. The State Coordinator will provide information about the need for and availability of services for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, upon request.
4. The State Coordinator will provide consultation in the area of program development, upon request.
5. The State Coordinator will collect and maintain statewide statistical information regarding children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
6. The State Coordinator will provide technical assistance as it relates to standards and assessment for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, upon request.
7. The State Coordinator will facilitate and monitor the development of regulations relating to standards for educational interpreters in Nebraska Department of Education (Rule 51) Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs
8. The State Coordinator will facilitate professional development and training opportunities to enhance the skills of individuals working with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Birth-21) at a statewide level.
9. The State Coordinator will coordinate a statewide stakeholder network for the purpose of communication, sharing information and gathering input on topics specific to deaf and hard of hearing. This stakeholder group consists of parents, professionals, and agencies who serve children Birth-21.

Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education will ensure the implementation of the Statewide Educational Programs and Support Services for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, with special attention to the following;

1. The Department of Education will maintain a system of Regional Programs across the state of Nebraska (i.e., oversight of development of contracts, board approval, and facilitate any financial questions).
2. The Department of Education will provide guidance to the Regional Programs and the State Coordinator.
3. The Department of Education will ensure that school districts provide students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing with a free appropriate public education.
4. The Department of Education will design and implement specialized professional and family training opportunities, in collaboration with state approved Regional Programs.
5. The Department of Education will continue to be responsible for the cost of **residential** educational placement as determined by the student's IFSP or IEP team. The school district of residence is responsible for the **transportation** and **educational** cost in accordance with the district's responsibility to provide the student with a free appropriate public education.

