

Call to Action

The Further Optimization of Outcomes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in California

Developed by Community Advisory Committee (CAC), California School for the Deaf

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In a unified response to the report by the Statewide Special Education Task Force, which is a comprehensive report to address the needs of education in California, the following is a Call to Action to further optimize the education of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) in California. While the Report released by the Special Education Task Force looks at disabilities across the board, the following action items are of particular importance to the field of Deaf Education in California. The aim is to address the widespread demand for a more data-based approach to language development of children, with specific regard to the expected cognitive, physical, social, emotional and cultural growth and hence further optimization of approximately 17,000 children who are D/HH in California.

Early Childhood Education

- Call a joint task force to address the necessary changes to the Newborn Hearing Screening and to the dissemination of information. This should include stakeholders at all levels. The California Department of Education (CDE) shall have oversight of this process in order to ensure that families receive appropriate resources and referrals.
- Immediately notify the California Deaf Education Resource Centers (CDERC) under the auspices of the CDE State Special Schools and Services Division every time a newborn is identified as D/HH. This ensures that the resources families receive are relevant to the infant's appropriate language development and educational milestones are met, for the desired and expected long-term ramifications.
- Provide opportunities for families of D/HH children to meet both Deaf and hearing parents of Deaf children. These are a valuable resource that is sorely underused and untapped for families which continues to cause undesirable long-term ramifications.
- Ensure that professionals qualified by the CDE through the auspices of both the CDERC and Northern and Southern Assessment Centers for the D/HH as per the California Education Code provide appropriate assessment, testing, and training. This will ensure that D/HH students receive assessment and testing by qualified individuals in the student's native language.
- Establish and implement American Sign Language (ASL) and written English benchmarks for D/HH children to be met upon entering Kindergarten, through the federally mandated Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individual Education Program (IEP) process. Research has shown that the earlier a child is exposed to a visual language, regardless of hearing status, the child will be more successful in school because of a strong foundation in language acquisition. While we recognize that IFSP and IEP are federally mandated, we recognize the need statewide to prepare and equip all D/HH students for kindergarten.

Improve Access

- Provide families and medical personnel with evidence-based resources under the auspices of the CDERC, in order for these families to make decisions with regard to the expected, research-based development milestones for D/HH children.
- Provide sign language instruction to families of D/HH children to protect the civil and legal rights of the D/HH child to acquire language, which will render positive effects on the D/HH individuals, their families, and society in general.

- Enact and enforce the model Communication Plan for the IEP team of each and every D/HH child in the state to address and document this child's education in consideration of both language and communication opportunities, for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication skills, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication needs, to attain the expected developmental milestones for D/HH children.
- Recognize that D/HH students benefit from direct communication through ASL. In these instances, student placement should be in an environment that support the D/HH language and communication needs at all levels.
- Formally recognize the importance and further reinforce the actuality of Language Rich Environment (LRE) for all D/HH students. This includes the State Special Schools, which provide an outstanding data-driven, evidence-based all-around model that supports the whole child development expected for all D/HH children in the state of California.
- Provide training and staff development oversight to support medical and audiological personnel and early intervention providers who share resources with families of D/HH children.
- Provide appropriate support and services for students who are D/HH and have additional disabilities.

Program Standards

- Demand a universally rigorous academic load, to maximize the child's capacity for learning and ability to achieve, for all D/HH children in alignment with the State Standards curriculum.
- Ensure that all D/HH students receive quality evidence-based instruction from a teacher(s) trained in Deaf Education with the appropriate credential(s) required or recognized by the State of California.
- Track and monitor the academic performance of all D/HH children under the auspices of the CDE State Special Schools and Services Division.

Update Funding Formulas

- Extend funding for the CDERC to provide and assist families of D/HH children statewide to learn ASL.
- Provide funding to implement the centralized approach under the Office Education for the Deaf under the auspices of the State Special Schools for the Deaf, which shall also maintain the support and resources for all Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), Local Educational Agencies (LEA), and County Offices of Education throughout California.
- Realign and appropriate the funding designated to SELPA for serving D/HH students towards the CDERC to establish, implement, and oversee the state's regional D/HH programs.
- Provide funding for research activities for D/HH students in regards to the provision of special education services, the impact of placement decisions on cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and cultural growth of D/HH students, and data collection to support data-driven instruction for D/HH students.
- Ensure that universities with Teacher Preparation Programs and the CDERC shall work together to actively address the dire shortage of qualified teachers and administrators of D/HH students, with specific regard to data-driven engagement among administrators, coordinators, teachers, students and families. This may include providing scholarship opportunities for those who pursue the Education Specialist with authorization for the D/HH population.

In closing, we ask for continued dialogue and action to implement the action items listed above. This will ensure that all D/HH students receive an education that is rigorous, challenging and individual to their specific needs in order to grow and thrive.

**For questions or comments, please email
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