

Recommendations for Educational Interpreter Standards



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February 2008

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Background Information

Currently, the State of Washington does not have standards for educational interpreters for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In 2006, Senate Bill 6606, required the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to the extent funds were appropriated, to develop standards for educational interpreters for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The legislation stipulated that standards must be focused on the specific skills and knowledge necessary to serve the communication needs of these students. Though no funding was provided, OSPI convened an advisory group with a diverse membership to provide recommendations to meet the intent of the bill.

Current Need

There are 277 individuals serving as educational interpreters in Washington school districts. Their skills range from beginning sign language to fluent signers, including tactile signing, finger spelling, etc. Twenty-six percent (26%) hold AA degrees, sixteen percent (16%) have a BA/BS degree and two individuals hold Master's degrees. Currently 10-14 of the 277 interpreters have national certification through the Registry for the Deaf, and 107-110 have received training from an interpreter training program. There are 1,500 deaf and hard of hearing students in the public schools. Not all of these students require educational interpreter services.

OSPI recognizes that educational interpreters need appropriate training to meet the diverse needs of the students. Once interpreters receive training and are in the classroom, ongoing mentoring and technical assistance is necessary to provide new interpreters with support to build expertise in their interpreting skills. Districts need to be able to support staff in ongoing training and in meeting the standards for passing the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or receiving certification by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

Short Term Recommendations

OSPI is requesting funding:

- To coordinate two training programs within the existing community and/or technical college framework. Washington School for the Deaf representatives as well as the Washington Sensory Disabilities Services personnel will provide technical assistance to ensure appropriate standards are incorporated in the training programs. [Estimated at \$150,000. The cost would cover program development or enhancement, meeting support, and travel cost for technical assistance.]
- To coordinate and support with the Washington School for the Deaf a mentoring program using local district educational interpreters who are identified as having the skills to provide technical assistance to new interpreters or interpreters in rural and remote areas of the state. [Estimated at \$100,000. The cost would

cover one quarter time of Washington State School for the Deaf interpreter coordinator to identify and train mentors and pay for “release time” to allow mentors time to work with mentees.]

- To provide incentives to districts to encourage their educational interpreters to pass the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or become certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). [Estimated at \$100,000. The funds would cover training fees such as conferences, workshops, etc., for ongoing clock hours and the EIPA assessment or RID registration fees.]

Long Term Concern and Recommendation

- **Concern:** Currently, there are two, two-year Interpreter Training Programs in Washington. However, these programs only offer training to work with deaf adults in a community setting. There are no programs in the state that offer training in educational interpretation.
- **Recommendation:** OSPI recommends that the Legislature explore the feasibility of developing an educational interpreter program in one or several of the institutions of higher education. Before requiring high standards for educational interpreters, there should be an accessible program.