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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Communication Plans for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Do all students with hearing loss have to have a Communication Plan?

Yes – all students, 3-21 years or until high school graduation, must have Communication Plans as part of their IEPs. Students for whom hearing loss is a secondary disability or who have concomitant visual impairments are included.

How frequently must the Communication Plan be reviewed?

The Communication Plan must be reviewed annually at the IEP meeting and modified when necessary. The Communication Plan should be completed prior to the development of the IEP goals with input from all members of the IEP team including the parents.

How is the Communication Plan developed?

The Communication Plan is individualized for each student and results from thoughtful discussion about that student and his/her communication access, social and instructional needs. It is not a checklist. If a district or BOCES does not use the state IEP form, they must insure that all five required Communication Plan components are addressed on the form used to ensure compliance with ECEA 4.02(4)(k). Meaningful discussions of each of five Communication Plan components will result in any necessary "Action Plans" to address relative needs. Teachers must also insure that there is meaningful correlation between the Communication Plan, the student's IEP goals and how the student functions in his/her educational environment.

How do I know that I am filling the form out correctly?

- a. Ask yourself if each point has been sufficiently explored and if the action plan reflects those conversations.
- b. Include on the form who will be responsible for carrying out each part of the plan that requires action.
- c. Include initial or review dates on the form

What if the parents don't use the same mode of communication as their child?

The student cannot be denied instructional opportunities based on their parents' ability to communicate.

What if a student who uses a different mode of communication than the one emphasized in our program wants to transfer to our school?

- a. A student's experience with other communication modes cannot be the basis for denial of instructional opportunity.
- b. The amount of the student's residual hearing cannot be used as the basis for denial of any instructional opportunity.

When the original law passed in 1996, there was language which stated, "nothing in this subsection shall require a school district to expend additional resources or hire additional personnel to implement the provisions of this subsection" (ECEA 22-20-108 4.7, III (g)). Is this still true?

No. The US Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) deemed this section to be inconsistent with FAPE (free appropriate public education) under IDEA. All services determined by the IEP team to be needed for the student must be provided for by the school.

Components of the Communication Plan: Discussion Points

1. What kind of discussions should we have about "The Child's Primary Mode(s) of Communication"?

- a. A clear identification of mode and consensus on how the student is communicating and whether his/her language development is appropriate should be addressed.
- b. Consideration should be given to the changing communication needs in different environments (e.g., various classes, "centers", cafeteria, gym, computer lab, home, community).

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- c. Consideration should be given to the different communication partners (e.g., teachers, other students, family) of this student.
 - d. The parents need for training to develop/improve skills in their child's primary communication mode should be considered.
- 2. What about "availability of deaf/hard of hearing peers and adult role models of the student's communication mode"?**
- a. Discuss the opportunities for direct communication that are available to this student. Does s/he have communication peers in the classroom? On the sports team? How will authentic peer relationships be supported and encouraged? How often is enough?
 - b. Consider participation in state sponsored regional activities for D/HH students as well as summer programs such as Aspen Camp School for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing.
 - c. Plan for adult role models of the student's communication mode to be included in his/her school experience and/or in meaningful ways involved in the child's life.
 - d. Discuss opportunities for hearing peers to improve communication skills with the student.
- 3. Must *all* educational options be presented and explained?**
- a. All educational options provided by the school district or administrative unit must be explained to the family. This includes neighborhood schools, center-based programs, and schools of choice.
 - b. An explanation of all educational programs *available* to the student must be provided. That would include residential deaf schools, charter schools, regional programs, and schools of choice.
 - c. Explaining all educational options does not require the IEP team to be experts in every program available in the state. Offer to loan the family the State Directory of D/HH Services so they can review *all* options if they're interested.
 - d. The placement decision is made by the IEP team, including parents, based on the child's IEP and communication needs.
- 4. Must teachers, interpreters, and other specialists delivering this Communication Plan have demonstrated proficiency in, and be able to accommodate for, the student's primary communication mode?**
- a. Special education providers must be fully qualified according to CDE licensing (teachers, SLPs, ed interpreters, Para educators, audiologists).
 - b. The providers' skills should be linked to the child's individual communication needs based on their mode or language.
 - c. The general educators working with this student should be been trained to support the child's communication mode.
 - d. Identify who is evaluating the "demonstrated communication proficiency" of the service providers. Is the evaluator qualified to do so?
 - e. Any paraprofessional or teaching assistant assigned to the student should also be proficient in his/her mode of communication.
 - f. CDE/CSDB D/HH consulting services should be utilized for consultation, evaluation, inservice and/or staff mentoring.
- 5. What does communication accessibility for academic instruction, school services, and extracurricular activities that apply to this student look like?**
- a. Identify how access will be provided to school announcements, field trips, assemblies, etc..
 - b. Identify the assistive communication devices and technologies that are needed (flashing fire alarms, TTYs, acoustical adaptations) to provide access for the student.
 - c. Describe how the student will communicate with hearing peers on the playground, at the football game, during sports team practice, or on the bus.
 - d. Describe the plan for accessibility in group communication settings where multiple speakers are talking. Describe how this student's communication will be translated back to the class (if necessary).
 - e. Determine that films and media being shown in the student's classes are closed captioned. Identify the other accommodations that are needed.