

May 5, 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

The Audiology Department at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind is in the process of obtaining funding to ameliorate the expansion of our services across the state of Utah. Our audiologists currently perform evaluations for students ages 0-21 years throughout the state, and provide consultative services to parents and teachers of Deaf and hard of hearing students. We provide a valuable service to students in our state, but we want to do more. In short, we want to accomplish the following:

1. Increase access to audiological services across the state for all children in the state of Utah, ages 0-21 years of age.
 - a. Install eight (8) audiological testing booths in strategic locations around the state.
 - b. Obtain audiological testing equipment, to be used in the new testing booth locations, for identifying and/or verifying hearing loss in children.
 - c. Obtain equipment for analyzing and programming hearing aids and modifying earmolds for children who need amplification.
 - d. Update the existing equipment in the current testing locations.
 - e. Initiate comprehensive cochlear implant mapping services in collaboration with Primary Children's Medical Center.
2. Enhance our role as a referral source for Child Find and Early Intervention Programs.
3. Become a model for other states by providing the highest standard in audiological care for rural and urban areas of Utah.

At present, our audiological services are provided locally at the USDB facilities in Ogden, Salt Lake City and Orem, Utah. In the past, our audiologists have used existing facilities owned by other agencies throughout the state to perform comprehensive behavioral hearing evaluations, and a mobile testing unit has been taken to areas where no testing facilities exist. However, in recent months, the mobile testing unit has been an unreliable source of transportation and has been very expensive to drive and maintain. Furthermore, the need for audiological services for children in the outlying areas of the state has increased; areas which do not have testing facilities.

As a referral source for hospitals and early intervention programs around the state, we have a responsibility to provide diagnostic and auditory habilitation services to children who fail hearing screenings, as outlined by the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (2007): "Confirmation of an infant's hearing status requires a test battery of audiological test procedures to assess the integrity of the auditory system in each ear, to estimate hearing sensitivity across the speech frequency range, to determine the type of hearing loss, to establish a baseline for further monitoring, and to provide information needed to initiate amplification-device fitting."

In other words, the more information we can obtain about a child's hearing, the more complete their educational plans can be. Our audiology department is in a unique position to provide immediate support to families of children who fail hearing screenings in the hospital, by performing follow-up testing, providing loaner hearing aids to families who need them, and educational support to late-identified children who are already attending school.

In order to accomplish the goal of completing comprehensive test batteries on children referred for testing, we must have the necessary tools. Technology is constantly changing and improving the way infants, toddlers, and children with special needs can be tested, in order to determine auditory function. We need to make the most of this technology to streamline evaluations and ensure accurate diagnoses, which is why we are requesting help in obtaining new equipment for our facilities.

Children with hearing loss also need continued surveillance, in order to monitor their hearing loss and educational progress (JCIH, 2007). Children who live in rural areas of the state do not have easy access to frequent monitoring. This is one of the challenges outlined in the JCIH, and our proposal addresses this concern, by increasing families' access to testing facilities and professionals.

In summary, potential donors will be investing in the futures of children with hearing loss. We are optimistic about our goals and are grateful for the consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Tonkovich, M.S., CCC-A/FAAA
Audiologist, Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind
1655 E. 3300 S.
Salt Lake City, UT 84106
(801) 464-2036
katiet@usdb.org