

USDB Statewide Educational Interpreting Service

The classroom is a complex communication environment. Students must integrate communication from a variety of speakers, often while many people are participating at the same time. For a student with hearing loss, a typical classroom environment can be quite challenging. Educational interpreters provide communication access to students who are deaf or hard of hearing by faithfully and accurately representing the classroom instruction, teacher/student dialogue, and relevant sound information in the mode of communication used by the student. The interpreter's role is to ensure that the student can fully and effectively access all sound information. Interpreters can convey both what hearing people say and what the student with hearing loss signs.

The U.S. Department of Education directs the educational team to consider social, emotional, and cultural needs, as well as linguistic and academic needs when considering whether a student needs an educational interpreter. The deaf or hard of hearing student must be able to access all aspects of the classroom curriculum, not just the teacher's lecture. This includes peer interaction which is important for social development.

Even students who can communicate easily using speech may need an interpreter. Often hard of hearing students can interact on their own in quiet environments with a limited number of speakers. However, it may be more difficult for those same students to interact in classroom settings with multiple speakers and in lessons containing new concepts and vocabulary. Students that are hard of hearing may understand some teachers without an interpreter, but it may be more difficult to understand other teachers because of their speech and language styles.

REQUIREMENTS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has designated sign language interpreting in school as a Related Service on a deaf or hard of hearing student's IEP. That student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) designates the responsibilities of the interpreter at school relative to a student's unique, individual needs. Not every deaf or hard of hearing student who needs communication access via an educational interpreter will require specialized instruction or special education services. In these cases, a different law, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, covers the interpreting accommodation. This civil rights law is designed to protect individuals from discrimination.

The Utah State Legislature enacted the Interpreter Services for the Hearing Impaired Act (53A-26a) to ensure that students who are deaf or hard of hearing in Utah schools are able to access a skilled, certified interpreter. The State Board of Education has established an Interpreter Certification Board to serve in an advisory capacity. The licensing of interpreters in the state is monitored by the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. All interpreters in the State of Utah are required to be either State of Utah certified or hold Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID) certification. Those in public education need to hold either Utah Certification, RID, or score a rating of 3.5 or above on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA). Although a rating of 4.0 and above is preferred for educational settings, new graduates of two-year Interpreter Training Programs may not achieve an EIPA score of 3.5.

Unqualified interpreters cannot provide access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Research shows that interpreters who fall below minimum standards omit and distort a significant amount of teacher and peer communication. When an interpreter is not highly qualified, a deaf or hard of hearing student misses vital classroom communication and does not receive adequate access to the general education curriculum. Currently, there is a scarcity of qualified educational interpreters in Utah,

especially in rural areas. Due to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining qualified staff, schools may hire individuals who know some American Sign Language but who are not certified interpreters. These individuals are being assigned to work with students in the educational setting, generally as an aide. Unfortunately, the communication environment of the classroom is very complex and an aide does not provide sufficient accommodation to support the student in accessing their educational program. Students who use sign language interpreters in educational settings struggle academically and socially when the skills of the interpreter or aide are inadequate.

Because hearing loss is a low-incidence disability, there are not many students throughout the state who require an educational interpreter. This adds to the difficulty of recruitment and retention, in an already scarce market. The school may not know what to look for when determining the skills and knowledge required when hiring or evaluating the performance of an educational interpreter. USDB can provide this expertise.

COST

USDB currently employs 25 educational interpreters, who provide services to students attending a USDB classroom program, primarily in the Wasatch Front area. These students are grouped into an educational setting where one interpreter can provide communication access to multiple students simultaneously. For students in non-USDB classrooms, each student generally requires the services of one full time interpreter to provide access to the entire school day. To effectively provide service at no charge to all Utah districts and charter schools, we estimate an increase of 25 FTE. The estimated cost of this expanded service is approximately \$2,400,000.00 annually. This increase in service from USDB would result in a consolidation of services and costs into one statewide resource.

	Current Service	Expanded Service
Personnel	\$ 1,181,477.50	\$ 2,362,955.00
Training	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Total Cost	\$ 1,196,477.50	\$ 2,392,955.00
Total Students Served	120	200
Cost per Student	\$ 9,970.65	\$ 11,964.78