



# SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WHO USE SIGN LANGUAGE

Identifying the most effective  
staffing choices to support language,  
academic and social-emotional growth

# FIRST THINGS FIRST!

## WHO IS THE STUDENT?

Gathering the following information will help determine the role(s) best suited to serve the student

- What are the cognitive and academic abilities of the student?
- What are the receptive and expressive language competencies (social and academic) of the student in all languages that apply (ASL\*/English/other)?
- What are the spoken English skills of the student?\*\*\*
- What is the ability of the student to attend in class and ask for clarification or repetition?
- What are the social-emotional abilities of the student?

## HOW DOES THE TEAM KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS?

\* NMSD offers evaluation services that include ASL competency.

\*\* Many D/HH students who use spoken language also rely on sign language for aspects of access and instruction. To learn more about strategies to support these students, contact your NMSD Educational Consultant.

Licensed interpreters in the K-12 setting are commonly thought of as the preferred service provider needed for a signing student attending a public school program. Licensed interpreters can be very effective for students who have a solid foundation in sign language and other interpreter-readiness skills. For students who don't, an interpreter is not the service the student needs. In these cases, there are other roles that could serve the student well.

When a student is not developmentally ready to use a licensed interpreter or when a licensed interpreter is not available, other role(s) to consider are:

SIGNING TEACHER  
SIGN LANGUAGE MODEL  
SIGNING AIDE/TUTOR  
SIGNING PEERS

# DEAF EDUCATOR/SIGNING TEACHER

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND WHO WOULD BENEFIT?

### THE JOB

- Completes duties related to Individual Education Plans, including assessment, writing present levels of performance, and development of goals and/or benchmarks for individual students. Provide direct instruction for the deaf or hard of hearing student when deemed appropriate
- Assess, monitor and strategically foster student language development.
- Uses formative assessment to inform instructional planning
- Prepares and utilizes instructional materials that support overall curricular goals
- Provide instruction or supplemental instruction when appropriate
- Provides “case manager” services for the deaf or hard of hearing student
- Provide support for general classroom teacher regarding instructional and assessment strategies that will best address the academic and social needs of deaf and hard of hearing students

### WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM A DEAF EDUCATOR/SIGNING TEACHER?

Any D/HH student, regardless of their language, development or academic level! Direct, multidimensional communication in the K-12 setting, is more efficient, effective and empowering than interpreted communication which is much more linear and involves a third party.

# DEAF EDUCATOR/SIGNING TEACHER

## WHAT SKILLS SHOULD THEY HAVE? \*

- ◉ Fluent sign language skills (see slide #15 re: fluency)
- ◉ Bachelor's and/or Master's Degree in Deaf Education, Special Education or related areas.
- ◉ Understanding of and ability to teach language transfer between sign language and English print.
- ◉ Highly qualified in the subject area(s) that are assigned, or commitment towards attaining Highly Qualified status.
- ◉ Possession of, or eligible for, New Mexico teacher licensure.

\* See slide #13 for a link to standards for Teachers of the Deaf

# SIGN LANGUAGE MODEL

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND WHO WOULD BENEFIT?

## THE JOB:

- ◉ Strategically inundate students with the concepts being introduced by the teacher with language to describe those concepts
- ◉ Parallel the activities happening in the classroom\*
- ◉ Simplify or expand on concepts, as appropriate
- ◉ Work closely with the classroom teacher to ensure corresponding experiences for the D/HH student mirror those of hearing students
- ◉ Describe student progress to the educational team, for them to assess

## WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM A SIGN LANGUAGE MODEL?

- ◉ Students who lack developmentally appropriate foundational language in ASL, commonly young students, but older students could benefit as well
- ◉ Students significantly limited developmentally in language, social emotional and/or cognitive skills
- ◉ Students not able to process the standard curriculum in an integrated setting

**\* Parallel instruction is distinctly different than interpreting.**

# SIGN LANGUAGE MODEL

## WHAT SKILLS SHOULD THEY HAVE?

- A *fluent (see slide #13 re: fluency) and native user of sign language* who is comfortable and skilled in communicating with a child the age of the student
- Ability to work in a structured educational setting
- Ability to identify the key areas and situations, with the support of the classroom teacher, where language development is needed
- The ability to move from simple to more complex language, based on student observation and discussions with the classroom teacher.

# SIGNING AIDE/TUTOR

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND WHO WOULD BENEFIT?

### THE JOB

- Provide academic support and reinforcement, designed by the classroom teacher, through some or all of the school day, based on level of support needed
- Provide tutoring sessions that happen inside or outside of the classroom
- Simplify or expand on concepts as appropriate upon the request and guidance of the classroom teacher
- Parallel what is happening in the classroom, exposing the D/HH student to the same concepts being introduced to all the students\*
- Provide 1:1 instruction, designed by the classroom teacher, to support concept development and language to describe those concepts
- Present information clearly, checking for knowledge and understanding
- Solicit information and questions from the student
- Give constructive feedback, providing reinforcement
- Communicate progress to the student and the classroom teacher

### WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM A SIGNING AIDE?

- Students lagging developmentally in language, academic, social emotional and/or cognitive skills
- Students who may or may not be able to handle the standard curriculum in an integrated setting, requiring support and/or supplemental instruction

\* Parallel instruction is distinctly different than interpreting.

# SIGNING AIDE/TUTOR

## WHAT SKILLS SHOULD THEY HAVE?

- ◉ Fluent sign language skills - the ability to dialogue and interact with the student for the purpose of developing knowledge - awareness of root word etymology in sign language to promote appropriate selection of conceptually accurate signs (see slide #13 re: fluency)
- ◉ Ability to work as a team member - provide a range of meaningful supports to students, based on guidance from the classroom teacher
- ◉ Ability to adjust signing based on developmental and language level of the student.
- ◉ Certified as an aide at the minimum standard set by NM PED

# SIGNING PEERS

- ◉ While we don't write position descriptions for peers, we cannot underestimate the power peers have on learning, motivation, esteem and the overall school experience.
- ◉ Signing students benefit from peers who can communicate with them directly at a conversational level. Having fluid communication with peers will lead to greater engagement both in and out of the classroom!
- ◉ Encourage student participation in events that will include D/HH peers by partnering with neighboring schools or districts to plan social events. Provide information to families about summer or weekend activities (camps for D/HH students; NMSD summer program for students; NMSD CONNECT Weekend; NMSD Family to Family Events; NMSD ASL Immersion Program)

*Researchers and practitioners have been particularly concerned about the social outcomes of students with hearing loss who attend public school programs where their classmates are primarily hearing, because of problems with peer communication and interaction (Kluwin, Stinson, & Colarossi, 2002).*

# IMPORTANCE OF AN EDUCATIONAL TEAM

All students benefit from a complete educational team. Deaf and hard of hearing students are no different, but often there is only one member of the team who has some level of training, understanding or communication skill that can directly support the student.

Programs serving these students would benefit from considering the following.....

Can one skilled staff member ensure a quality educational program for a student?

How can the educational team surrounding the student combine their skills to increase access and a high-expectation program for the student?

When might a student need combined roles to support their educational program (i.e. an interpreter and a tutor or an aide and a deaf educator)?

# SUPPORT IN FILLING POSITIONS

- ◉ Deafed.net is a comprehensive website offering a variety of supports for the field of deaf education. The website hosts a job vacancy/resume posting section for any deaf education related position. [www.deafed.net](http://www.deafed.net)
- ◉ Sign Language Interpreter referral links...  
<http://www.cdhh.state.nm.us/InterpreterReferral.aspx>
- ◉ UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program graduates approximately 15 students per year  
[http://www.unm.edu/~sign/UNM\\_Interpreting\\_Program/Welcome.html](http://www.unm.edu/~sign/UNM_Interpreting_Program/Welcome.html)
- ◉ Contract agencies that can connect school districts with K-12 interpreters
  - Sunbelt Staffing  
<http://www.sunbeltstaffing.com/schools/school-sign-language-interpreter/>
  - Soliant Health <http://www.soliant.com/schools/sign-language-jobs/>
- ◉ NMSD Educational Consultants 505-476-6400

# KEEPING HIGH STANDARDS FOR TEAM MEMBERS

How do school administrators know if staff possess the needed skill set?

Council on Education of the Deaf has established standards for Teachers of the Deaf

<http://councilondeafed.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/04/Specialty-Set-1.pdf>

Standards for Interpreter Licensure in New Mexico

<http://www.cdhh.state.nm.us/Licensure.aspx>

American Sign Language Proficiency Interview provides assessment related to staff fluency in ASL

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/asldes/aslpi.html>

# STAFF COMPARISON CHART

	Deaf Educator	Sign Language Model	Signing Aide or Tutor
Responsible for the design and oversight of implementation of all aspects of educational programming	X		
Complete all tasks under the guidance of the deaf educator or classroom teacher		X	X
Fluent/native user of ASL	X	X	X
Provide planned tutoring sessions under the guidance of the classroom teacher			X
Responsible for assessment and the development of IEP goals	X		
Primary role is to promote language and concept growth		X	
Serve as a case manager for the DHH student	X		
Simplify or expand on concepts as appropriate	X	X	X
Provide 1:1 instruction, designed by the classroom teacher			X

# HOW CAN YOU BETTER SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT?

For more information or discussion around this topic, please be in touch with your assigned NMSD Educational Consultant.

New Mexico School for the Deaf  
Center for Educational Consultation  
and Training 505-476-6400