

Educational Services

The school districts, Educational Service Units (ESUs) and regional cooperatives listed serve a wide geographical area of Nebraska with a student population base of approximately 63,000 children, kindergarten through grade 12. The population centers served range from Class 3 districts (Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, North Platte, Ogallala, and Scottsbluff) to a multitude of Class 1 and 2 districts scattered over sparsely populated areas. Currently the school districts, ESUs and regional cooperatives serve approximately 230 children identified as deaf or hard of hearing.

There is a long history of service delivery to deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) children in this region. Districts, ESUs and cooperatives have, over the years, developed and implemented direct instructional services as well as support services to benefit children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. These services have included:

1. Individual instruction as per the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
Birth to 3 years
2. Home based instruction for children who are d/hh (most commonly for birth to kindergarten)
3. Regional classes for children who are d/hh (below Age 5 - including toddler programs)
4. Consultative deaf education services
5. Deaf education services provided in the regular classroom
6. Self-contained deaf education instruction
7. Regional center-based classrooms for children who are d/hh (school age)
8. Residential placement at Iowa School for the Deaf
9. Support service such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, audiological services, school psychologist and administrative services.

The services that each student receives are the result of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). It is the IEP team, with parent input, that determines the service that would best meet each child's need (e.g., in-class vs. center-base, sign systems, accommodations for extra-curricular activities etc.).



Enhancement Services Through the Regional Partnership

The school districts, ESUs and cooperatives in the Partnership meet the educational needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, these children present school districts with unique issues and needs. Recognizing this, the Nebraska Department of Education provided an opportunity to develop regional programs to address those issues. The Partnership was developed, in 1997, by a cooperative group representing the region. Priority needs were identified at that time and have been revised to include:

1. Maximize resources in providing programs and services to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. Provide a network of support and services throughout the region, which would include utilizing the services and support offered by the Nebraska Department of Education Special Populations Office.
3. Provide training opportunities for currently employed and newly hired educational interpreters.
4. Provide group activities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to enhance socialization and communication opportunities.
5. Enhance cooperation between the Partnership members and other agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, community colleges, etc. in order to plan and carry out Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).
6. Provide an information network for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and their families.
7. Provide staff and parent training opportunities, since they are essential components for meeting the needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
8. Provide resources through the lending library housed at ESU #9 for professionals, children and parents.
9. Facilitate collaboration across all existing programs and service providers in order to effectively meet the needs of children who are deaf/hard of hearing and their families.



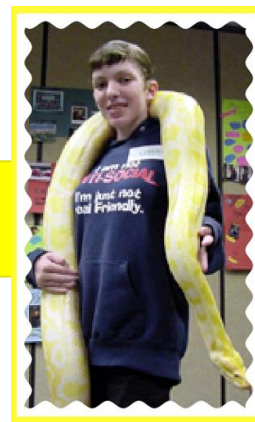
Nebraska Regional Program Roles

The Nebraska Department of Education: Statewide Educational Programs and Support Services for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Document, December 10, 2004 identifies the following:

The Regional Programs will work cooperatively to maximize state and local resources for the enhancement of the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. (Birth through 21)

1. The Regional Programs serve as the statewide networking system among children, parents, professionals, and the Nebraska Department of Education and other agencies serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. The Regional Programs will cooperatively plan and coordinate student activities to provide opportunities for socialization through a unique and shared mode of communication.
3. The Regional Programs will develop summer education experiences.
4. The Regional Programs will encourage family involvement in educational and social activities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
5. Each Regional Program will promote excellence and equity for all children (B-21) in Nebraska who are deaf or hard of hearing.
6. Each Regional Program will build upon existing services, promote cooperative agreements among service providers, and support the ongoing development of outreach services.
7. Each Regional Program will provide social and educational opportunities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing (B-21) to interact with others in a language barrier free environment.
8. Each Regional Program will assist in offering professional development and training opportunities to enhance the skills of individuals working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. (B-21)
9. Each Regional Program will assist school districts in assuring that educational interpreters meet the state standards established by the Nebraska Department of Education (Rule 51) Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs.
10. Each Regional Program will assist in identifying technological equipment for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
11. Each Regional Program will assist in identifying the availability of specialized technological equipment.
12. Each Regional Program will serve as a clearinghouse of specialized materials and information relating to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

13. Each Regional Program will serve as a resource to families, children, and school districts.
14. Each Regional Program will provide technical assistance and assist the Nebraska Department of Education with statewide initiatives.
15. Each Regional Program will collect and maintain statistical information regarding children who are deaf or hard of hearing within their region.
16. Each Regional Program will identify and utilize appropriate Deaf Role models for student activities.



The Central/Western Partnership will address each of those roles in the following manner:

1. The Regional Programs serve as the statewide networking system among children, parents, professionals, and the Nebraska Department of Education and other agencies serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Maintain email distribution list of deaf educators, speech/language pathologists, interpreters, and administrators throughout the Partnership area. This list is used to notify staff of upcoming training opportunities, activities, etc.
- Maintain a contact directory of staff members in the CWNP working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and distribute to all staff members on the list.
- Share information with other Regional Coordinators at monthly meetings and via email for statewide distribution.
- Meet with the western area staff members to distribute information and discuss issues.
- Present at bi-annual statewide meetings with administrators and program coordinators to update on Regional Programs' and to obtain input.
- Distribute information to parents concerning upcoming events/activities.
- Act as a clearinghouse for information on opportunities for training and student activities.
- Maintain a working relationship with employees at Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH).
- Coordinate with colleges (Front Range, UNC, UNO, UNL, etc.) about training opportunities.
- Attend regional and state NASES meetings for input from area Sped Directors and supervisors.
- Provide sign language mentor service to interpreters and deaf educators in the

- CWNP region and coordinate training.
- Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues.
 - Communicate with NDE Liaison for Programs for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
 - Provide transition and post-secondary information to staff members and parents.
 - Coordinate across the region on activities and issues.
 - Facilitate and attend in-services in order to develop working relationships with staff in the CWNP.
 - Sponsor activities that provide opportunities for children who are d/hh to develop relationships with each other.
 - Distribute Partnership information to children and families through their local deaf educators.
 - Have meetings with coordinators and deaf educators to provide updates and distribute materials and equipment, including an annual opening meeting.
 - Write and distribute quarterly newsletter to staff, parents, children and administrators.

2. The Regional Programs will cooperatively plan and coordinate student activities to provide opportunities for socialization through a unique and shared mode of communication.

- Attend monthly Regional Program Coordinator Meetings to organize state and regional activities for children.
- Distribute information to deaf educators on upcoming activities.
- Provide opportunities for staff in the region to give suggestions for activities.
- Provide funding for local areas to develop local activities for their children.
- Through evaluations of activities, gather student/staff input for upcoming activities and satisfaction with activity provided.
- Incorporate student/staff input into planning future activities.

3. The Regional Programs will develop summer education experiences.

- Coordinate with colleges and universities to provide classes as needed or requested.
- Provide sign language classes to professionals.
- Provide sign language training to parents and extended families.
- Provide opportunities for attendance at national and state conferences.
- Provide summer activities/classes for children, on a local basis.
- Provide funds for attending Camp Anderson for children ages 11 through 18 or until graduation.
- Distribute information about summer opportunities available through other agencies.

4. The Regional Programs will encourage family involvement in educational and social activities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Invite parents to all activities.
- Provide mileage reimbursement for parents to attend activities & workshops.
- Provide transportation for some activities.
- Provide lodging for some activities and workshops.

- Communicate with parents about the value of their participation.
- Provide family sign at a place and time of parent's choice, to maximize their comfort in learning sign language.
- Provide information about our lending library and distribute catalogs.
- Facilitate "Sign and Dine" opportunities in various locations.

5. Each Regional Program will promote excellence and equity for all children (B-21) in Nebraska who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Assist districts with program development.
- Assist districts with recruiting and hiring qualified personnel to serve children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide financial support for staff recruitment.
- Assist parents by supplying contact information about various programs, upon request.
- Provide professional development for staff and administrators, upon request.
- Participate as an outside consultant to IEP teams, when requested.
- Maintain and update a Lending Library of materials for districts to use.
- Maintain FM systems available for loan to districts.
- Encourage professionals (regular educators, speech pathologists, etc) to obtain a deaf education endorsement and provide information about programs.
- Make assistive technology options known to professional staff, parents and children.
- Provide Assistive Technology Kits for demonstrations by the deaf educators at IEP meetings or Open Houses at schools.
- Obtain input from school/staff on needs related to the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide self-advocacy activities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Network professionals that work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide funds to purchase needed educational materials specific to instructing individual children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide a Sign Language Curriculum developed by staff in the CWNP area to use in teaching sign language classes, including Family Sign. This curriculum is used in conjunction with the tub of materials.
- Provide financial assistance for training opportunities specific to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

6. Each Regional Program will build upon existing services, promote cooperative agreements among service providers, and support the ongoing development of outreach services.

- Maintain and update information concerning existing programs and services in the CWNP area and the state.
- Share information with Special Education Administrators and service providers about existing programs.
- Maintain open communication with the Special Education Directors and Superintendents.
- Assist districts in alternative placements, upon request.

- Attend IEP meetings at residential placements, upon district request.
- 7. Each Regional Program will provide social and educational opportunities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing (B-21) to interact with others in a language barrier free environment.**
- Organize and fund peer activities for children throughout the CWNP area.
 - Provide activities that vary in subject and location from year to year.
 - Provide activities that give opportunities for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to meet their peers throughout the state. While these activities have varied slightly, the following have been state wide activities:
 - Fall Activity - sponsored by the Metro Regional Program
 - Elementary Extravaganza – sponsored by the Northeast Regional Program
 - Storytelling Festival – sponsored by the Central/Western Partnership
 - Winter Dance – sponsored by the Metro Regional Program
 - Arts Festival – sponsored by the Southeast Regional Program
 - Optimist Communication Contest – sponsored by the Northeast Regional Program
 - Camp Anderson – sponsored by all Regional Programs
- 8. Each Regional Program will assist in offering professional development and training opportunities to enhance the skills of individuals working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. (B-21)**
- Provide financial assistance to attend national conferences specific to information about deaf and hard of hearing children.
 - Provide financial assistance for attendance at training opportunities supported by the Partnership.
 - Provide financial assistance for non-Partnership training opportunities, when approved.
 - Bring in experts in the field to provide in-services to staff, parents, etc..
 - Coordinate with the other regions to allow access to training opportunities state wide.
 - Capitalize on expertise of state and regional staff available for training and sharing of information.
 - Provide training opportunities for speech pathologists, resourced teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators involved with the education of the children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Coordinate with colleges and universities to offer classes that pertain to educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- 9. Each Regional Program will assist school districts in assuring that educational interpreters meet the state standards established by the Nebraska Department of Education (Rule 51) Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs.**
- Provide interpreter mentoring by CWNP staff.
 - Coordinate with Boys Town National Research Hospital (BTNRH) staff for interpreter mentoring.
 - Recruit and train people to become interpreters.

- Maintain statistical information about interpreters working in the CWNP region.
- Provide financial support for Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) testing until interpreters meet Rule 51 criteria.
- Assist Assessment System (AS) for K-12 educational interpreters with EIPA testing.
- Assist districts in meeting Rule 51 criteria as it relates to educational interpreters.
- Provide NDE with current educational interpreter skill level information.
- Maintain working relationships with educational interpreter training programs.
- Provide information to interpreters about training and testing opportunities.
- Provide information to districts /administrators concerning interpreter qualifications and skill levels.
- Participate in interpreter interview teams, when requested.
- Assist with recruiting for open positions, when requested.
- Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues by CWNP interpreter mentor.
- Coordinate with Boys Town and UNO to provide workshops throughout the CWNP that develop sign and interpreter skills.

10. Each Regional Program will assist in identifying technological equipment for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

11. Each Regional Program will assist in identifying the availability of specialized technological equipment.

- Provide Assistive Technology Kits to demonstrate specific equipment available. Some equipment is available for loan to determine appropriateness.
- Update staff on new technology specific to children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Provide catalogs and informational flyers concerning cost, availability and appropriateness of equipment for individual needs.
- Provide information for comparison of different products.
- Maintain FM systems that are available for loan.
- Assist districts and/or parents with purchasing decisions in regards to FM systems and other assistive devices.
- Provide information on financial aid for purchase of equipment (Medicaid, Travelers Protection Agency, HIKE, etc.)
- Work with area audiologists to assist in obtaining equipment and the setting of equipment.
- Provide funding for attendance at the workshops that focus on Cochlear Implants, including the workshops presented at Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Missouri.
- Facilitate technology fairs to demonstrate new technology.

12. Each Regional Program will serve as a clearinghouse of specialized materials and information relating to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Maintain and update a quality lending library. (The current lending library has over 900 items for loan)
- Maintain and update mini-lending libraries at multiple sites.
- Maintain a process for distributing and collecting materials and equipment.
- Distribute information received, (current trends, new materials, etc.)
- Have current periodicals available for check out.
- Maintain information about current list serves.
- Distribute information about program development.
- Provide information about specific materials and how to purchase.

13. Each Regional Program will serve as a resource to families, children, and school districts.

- Provide information to parents through the deaf educator serving the student.
- Maintain a lending library (at ESU #9) which includes materials that are available to all staff, parents, and children with an interest in sign language and or hearing losses.
- Update and distribute the current lending library catalog.
- Maintain an email distribution list of deaf educators, interpreters, administrators, and speech pathologists throughout the Partnership area. This list is used to notify staff of upcoming training opportunities, activities, etc.

- Act as a clearinghouse for information on opportunities for training and student activities.
- Provide interpreter mentor service to interpreters and deaf educators in the CWNP region and coordinate training.
- Write and distribute a quarterly newsletter to staff, parents, children, and administrators.
- Provide sign language classes to professionals.
- Provide sign language training to parents and extended families in a comfortable environment.
- Provide professional development for staff and administrators, upon request.
- Participate as an outside consultant to IEP teams, when requested.
- Make assistive technology options known to professional staff, parents, and children.
- Provide funds to purchase needed educational materials specific to instructing individual deaf or hard of hearing children.
- Share information with Special Education Administrators and service providers about existing programs.
- Maintain an open line of communication with the Special Education Directors and Superintendents.
- Assist districts in alternative placements, upon request.
- Attend IEP/MDT meetings at residential placements, upon request.
- Provide training opportunities for deaf educators, interpreters as well as speech pathologists, resource teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators involved with the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Assist ASK-12 with EIPA testing for interpreters.
- Assist districts with waiver procedures.
- Provide information to districts/administrators concerning interpreter qualifications and skill levels.
- Participate on interpreter interview teams, when requested.
- Assist with recruiting for open positions.
- Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues.

14. Each Regional Program will provide technical assistance and assist the Nebraska Department of Education with statewide initiatives.

- Attend monthly coordinator meetings with NDE representative.
- Coordinate with the Deaf/Blind project for training specific to deaf/blindness
- Coordinate with other agencies receiving NDE funds to provide training.
- Coordinate with the Early Childhood Training Center to provide training.
- Present information on regional programs at local, state and national conferences.
- Communicate with the Liaison for Programs for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Provide a calendar of events to the Liaison for Programs for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing annually.
- Invite the Liaison for Programs for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to the annual CWNP informational meeting

- Serve on committees concerning issues related to the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Communicate with the Liaison for Programs for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing concerning ongoing Partnership activities.

15. Each Regional Program will collect and maintain statistical information regarding children who are deaf or hard of hearing within their region.

- Collect information concerning the number of deaf educators in the CWNP region.
- Collect information concerning the number of educational interpreters in the CWNP region.
- Collect information concerning the level of skill of educational interpreters in the CWNP region.
- Collect information on the number of deaf children in the region.
- Collect information on the number of hard of hearing children in the region.
- Collect information about the number of children with cochlear implants in the region.
- Screen appropriate children for Ushers Syndrome and submit reports to the deaf/blind project at NDE.
- Collect data on the children assessed through Universal New Born Screening.
- Collect data concerning the districts that have used CWNP services.
- Collect evaluation information on the activities, workshops, and services that CWNP provides.

16. Each Regional Program will identify and utilize appropriate role models who deaf or hard of hearing for student activities.

- Maintain names and addresses of interested role models that are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Maintain names and addresses of interested graduates of schools in the CWNP area.
- In cooperation with the other regions, sponsor a reunion of children who graduated from schools served by regional programs.
- Collaborate with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as a resource for interested persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Collaborate with UNL, UNO and other colleges and universities as resources.

