

E.10 Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Definition

A student considered to be deaf or hard of hearing is one who has a medically diagnosed hearing loss that results in a substantial educational difficulty

A student who is deaf or hard of hearing has an audiological assessment by an audiologist that affirms a bilateral hearing loss, a unilateral loss with significant speech/language delay, or a cochlear implant.

Students with a diagnosis of central auditory processing dysfunction are not considered for this category unless there is an additional diagnosis of peripheral hearing loss.

For information pertaining to students who are deafblind, see page 66

To be eligible for supplemental funding as a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, the following conditions must be met:

- A medical diagnosis of a significant hearing loss has been made; and
- A current IEP is in place that includes:
 - individualized goals,
 - adaptations and/or modifications where appropriate,
 - the strategies to meet these goals, and
 - measures for tracking student achievement in relation to the goals.
- The student is receiving inclusive education services that are directly related to the student's hearing loss on a regular basis from a qualified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing.
- For students with unilateral hearing loss, there must be significant hearing loss in the affected ear and an annual assessment of impact must be documented.
- Those with a cochlear implantation are receiving services on a regular basis from a qualified education professional with special training.
- The services being provided are beyond those offered to the general student population and are proportionate to level of need(s).
- The inclusive education services are outlined in the IEP and directly relate to the student's identified disabilities or diverse abilities.
- Reduction in class size is not by itself a sufficient service to meet the definition.

In general, the support needs of students with unilateral hearing loss can be managed by classroom adaptations. A student with a unilateral hearing loss should not be reported for funding unless the hearing loss is moderate to profound (the affected ear has a pure tone average loss of 50 dB or greater for the frequencies 500 Hz to 4000 Hz) and there is evidence of support from a qualified education professional.

A student with educationally significant problems, which are directly attributable to the unilateral hearing loss, may only be reported in this category if qualified personnel conduct an assessment annually to provide evidence that the hearing loss seriously impacts the student's education. The assessment typically includes audiology, speech language, communication, and/or social skills development.

Identification and Assessment

Most children with significant hearing loss will have been identified through an audiological assessment prior to entering the school system.

Any student referred for inclusive education services during his or her school career should be referred for a hearing assessment in order to determine whether an intermittent or chronic hearing loss is the primary cause of any exhibited learning or behavioural problem.

Hearing loss is generally measured in terms of decibel loss using standards agreed on internationally. However, decibel losses do not always correlate with educational implications and are therefore not a sole criterion for determination of need for educational intervention. Following the identification of a student's hearing loss an assessment to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the student in the areas of language development and communication skills may be required. This assessment, usually administered by a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, may include the administration of standardized tests in the areas of ability and achievement, as well as curriculum-based assessment and observation and teacher reports. Program planning decisions and recommendations for placement of the student in a specific program should occur only once a full assessment has been completed.

A critical part of the assessment process is determining the method of communication to be used in the educational setting. The Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport and Ministry of Health will select assistive living equipment from a set list of available equipment. The Ministry of Education and Child Care, through the Auditory Outreach Program, is responsible for maintaining this list and making it available to the health authority audiologist for selection.

Ministry of Health will provide hearing aid selection, fitting, verification and monitoring services. Ministry of Education and Child Care, through its boards of education and participating independent school authorities may monitor remote microphone hearing assistance technology in accordance with best practices on the Board of Hearing Aid Dealers.

Planning and Implementation

The educational programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing typically include specific instruction in:

- language development, auditory management;
- speech development, speech reading;
- sign language as required; and
- deaf culture when appropriate.

In addition to addressing the direct effects of hearing loss and language development, the IEP should address the social and vocational needs which arise as a result of the hearing loss and which are known to be significant.

Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing can and should be educated in their local school district. Typically, programming for students with hearing loss involves one or more of the following services:

- a regular class with direct, frequent support from a qualified itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing;
- a resource room staffed by a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing;
- a self-contained class staffed by a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing who has access to the appropriate support services; and/or
- an individual program for students with hearing loss and additional disabilities or diverse abilities.

The prevalence of hearing loss is low. Therefore, the provision of a full range of services within a single school district is not always feasible. In such cases, school districts are encouraged to collaborate to provide regional programs that serve the needs of students in several districts. In particular, the social and emotional needs of adolescent students who are deaf or hard of hearing may require more than itinerant services.

Where there are a sufficient number of students, local or regional school programs may be developed with qualified staff and the appropriate services to support those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Further to the above options, when the needs of a particular deaf or hard of hearing student cannot first be met locally or regionally, or where special circumstances prevail, the student may be referred to the Provincial Educational Review Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students for

- recommendations for programming; and/or
- determination of eligibility for Provincial Resource Programs designed for students with hearing loss.

Evaluation and Reporting

School districts are responsible for developing clearly defined policies and procedures which include a mechanism for:

- assessing the effectiveness of local programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing”;
- monitoring the educational program of a student placed in a regional or provincial setting to ensure continued appropriateness; and
- evaluating student progress specific to the additional service provided by a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing.
- Such evaluation may result in adjustment of communication methodology, recommendations for either additional or reduced service, recommendation for alternate placement, etc.

It is expected that students who are deaf or hard of hearing will meet the Learning Standards of the BC curriculum. As outlined in the Inclusive Education section of the [K-12 Student Reporting Policy](#), regular reporting procedures are used to communicate student learning for these students.

Personnel

Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing

Specialist teachers with responsibilities for supporting students reported in this category should fulfill the qualifications described for a learning assistance teacher (see Section D.1 Learning Assistance Services).

A specialist teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing should have:

- a valid B.C. Teaching Certificate; and
- a Master’s degree or diploma in the education of the deaf and hard of hearing;
or
- certification by the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CAEDHH).

Where a district is unable to employ a specialist teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, this requirement may be met by providing services through sharing arrangements with adjacent districts or through a fee-for-service arrangement with qualified specialist teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Visual language interpreters

Where a district determines that a student's program will include the services of a visual language interpreter, often referred to as an interpreter or sign language interpreter, the visual language interpreter should meet standards established by:

- the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf, Inc. (R.I.D), or
- the Association of Visual Language Instructors of Canada (AVLIC);
- or be a graduate of the Douglas College Visual Language Interpreter Training Program or an equivalent program from another institution.

Supporting cochlear implant recipients

School boards should ensure that specialist educators have appropriate qualifications to support students who need services after they have had surgery for cochlear implantation.

Education assistants

Education assistants working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing should have sufficient training and understanding of hearing loss for the duties they are assigned. Education assistants should be able to demonstrate:

- an understanding of the social, emotional and educational implications of hearing loss; and
- competence in the communication mode of the student(s).

Where the role of the education assistant is to facilitate communication between the student and others in the environment the district should ensure the teacher assistant can demonstrate proficiency in the communication mode of the student. In instances where sign communication and/or oral interpretation is required and the individual is not a qualified interpreter, districts are advised to arrange for qualified interpreters to evaluate the communication competency of the education assistant.

Resources

Auditory Training Equipment

School boards determine whether students who have a hearing loss need auditory training equipment for classroom use. The Ministry of Education and Child Care makes auditory training equipment available to school districts for the use of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in public and independent schools and provides for routine maintenance. See Appendix H.2.1 Auditory Outreach Program (POP-AO).

Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf or Hard of Hearing (POPDHH)

The Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf or Hard of Hearing is available to provide consultative and support services to school districts.

Resource Centre

A resource centre for deaf, hard of hearing and speech materials has been established as part of the outreach program of the Provincial School for the Deaf to permit teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and other district personnel to review recent professional publications, assessment tools and media materials.