

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, rounded shapes in a lighter shade of teal. These shapes are positioned on the left and center of the page, creating a layered, abstract effect. The text is centered on the right side of the page.

**Pennsylvania Agenda
for Students
Who Are Deaf,
Hard of Hearing,
or Deaf-Blind**

Pennsylvania Agenda for Students Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind

In 1988, the Congressional Commission on the Education of the Deaf (COED) Report found the state of education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in America to be unacceptable. In 1991, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, partially in response to the COED Report, established the Educational Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL) Advisory Committee. This committee was charged with the responsibility of 1) responding to requests from the Bureau of Special Education for information and advice concerning the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and 2) bringing to the attention of the Bureau of Special Education current issues related to the education of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in Pennsylvania. In 2005, the ERCHL Committee, utilizing the National Agenda, *Achieving Educational Equality*, as its reference and Lawrence Siegel as its consultant, initiated the development of the Pennsylvania Agenda for Students Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind. After more than two years of discussion, consultation, and editing, the Agenda has been presented to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for its consideration and implementation.

The Pennsylvania Agenda contains a set of goals and activities designed to ensure positive educational outcomes for all Pennsylvania students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. It is divided into nine major areas of concern:

- I. Language and communication access
- II. Early identification and early intervention
- III. Family involvement
- IV. Placements and programs
- V. Technology
- VI. System responsibility: Standards, assessment, and accountability
- VII. Professional standards and preparation
- VIII. Collaborative partnerships
- IX. Deaf-blindness

Each area is divided into 1) a set of goals, 2) actions to be performed to attain each goal, and 3) desired outcomes. Some of the goals may require legislative action; some may need formal authorization from the Pennsylvania Department of Education through guidelines or Basic Education Circulars (BECs); and some may be implemented at the school district or intermediate unit level. From goals to actions to outcomes, the Pennsylvania Agenda functions as a roadmap to improve services for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. The status of specific goals, actions, and outcomes will be updated periodically, and that information may be accessed at <https://www.pattan.net/Resources/other-resources/Pennsylvania-Agenda-for-Students-Who-Are-Deaf-Hard>.

The Pennsylvania Agenda: Goals, Actions, and Outcomes

I. Language and Communication Access

System Goal: All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in the commonwealth will develop age-appropriate receptive and expressive language and communication proficiencies fundamental to literacy, educational achievement, and full participation in adult life in the communities of their choices.

Background: The development of effective, age-appropriate language and communication skills in the mode and language choice of a child and family requires opportunities to practice in language-rich environments where the child can access language easily and directly with adult role models and a critical mass of age and language peers. All children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have a right to full language and communication access within all program options and for all services and facets of their educational experiences and environments.

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
I.1 All Individual Family Service Plan / Individual Education Program (IFSP/IEP) team members will recognize the significance of a child's/student's language, communication, and literacy needs and the importance of a full continuum of placement options to provide for those needs.	I.1.2 Provide professional staff members with balanced information and research-based training in communication modalities, language development, and literacy development.	I.1.2 IFSP/IEP teams will apply the special considerations language in IDEA, including information about direct communication with peers and adults, and will discuss language and communication options as implemented in all educational settings and across all major transitions for the student.
I.2 All IFSP/IEP team decisions will be language and communication driven and will be consistent across all transition points in the child's educational experience.	I.1.2 Provide statewide training to ensure that IFSP/IEP team members are knowledgeable about language and communication acquisition and choices, and their relationship to educational settings.	I.1.3 A Communication Plan will be required by Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania State Regulations as part of the IFSPs/IEPs of all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.
I.3 All IFSPs/IEPs of children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will incorporate Communication Plans to guarantee compliance with the special requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure a meaningful discussion of children's/students' essential language and communication needs and functioning.	I.1.3 Create a Communication Plan format for children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, to be completed by all IFSP/IEP teams and attached to all IFSPs/IEPs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.	I.1.3 A Communication Plan format will be developed and disseminated and training will be provided in its use for all school districts, intermediate units, and other service providers.
I.4 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families will receive accurate and balanced information about the full range of language and communication choices available in Pennsylvania.	I.1.3 Develop training materials and workshops to facilitate the use of the Communication Plan by IFSP/IEP teams.	I.1.3 Compliance monitoring will reveal that 100 percent of all IFSPs/IEPs designed for children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind contain Communication Plans.
	I.1.4 In collaboration with the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), develop print and media information that lists and describes the availability of the full range of language and communication options, and distribute it to families of children/students prior to and at IFSP/IEP meetings, especially during times of transition.	I.1.4 Children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families will receive information regarding the full range of language and communication options, and will be informed, active participants in the educational decision-making process.

II. Early Identification and Early Intervention

System Goal: As part of a seamless, language- and communication-driven early intervention system for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families in the commonwealth, all families will be provided with early, balanced, and comprehensive information to assist them in making appropriate language, communication, and educational decisions for their children.

Background: The importance of the earliest possible development of a child’s communication cannot be over-emphasized. While this is true for all children, it has special relevance for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Infants whose hearing loss is discovered early and who receive appropriate early intervention services before the age of six months have significantly better language development outcomes than children who receive services later (Yoshinago-Itano, 1998).

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
<p>II.1 A comprehensive and seamless statewide system will ensure transition from identification to appropriate service provision, including ways to access qualified service providers serving infants, toddlers, and young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind from birth to the age of beginners in the commonwealth.</p>	<p>II.1.2 In collaboration with the Departments of Health and Human Services, develop a structure and clearly defined process to link early identification to early intervention services.</p>	<p>II.1 All infants who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families will have received appropriate early intervention services by the age of six months.</p>
<p>II.2 All families of newly diagnosed children will receive comprehensive, balanced, and accurate information immediately regarding the meaning and consequence of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, the central importance of language and communication development, and all possible language and communication modality options.</p>	<p>II.2.3.4 Develop policies to ensure that all entities responsible for IFSPs/IEPs fully understand the central role of language acquisition and communication development; the concept of natural environments/least restrictive environment for infants, toddlers, and young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; what is meant by special factors as required under IDEA; and how to provide for language rich environments and full communication access across all transition points in early intervention and education.</p>	<p>II.2 Immediately following identification of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, all families will have received comprehensive, balanced information and materials related to the unique language and communication needs of infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing to help with transition to enter and receive appropriate services.</p>
<p>II.3 All families with infants identified as having hearing loss or deaf-blindness will receive early intervention services from appropriately trained and knowledgeable professionals who can support families and their children in the acquisition and development of language and communication.</p>	<p>II.2 Develop parent- and family-friendly training programs and print and media materials that present comprehensive, balanced, accurate information concerning language and communication development principles and choices.</p>	<p>II.2.3.4 All early intervention service coordinators in Pennsylvania will have received specific training and materials related to the unique language and communication needs of infants and toddlers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Infants and toddlers who are deaf-blind will be registered on the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Census.</p>
<p>II.4 All IFSPs/IEPs for children from birth to the age of beginners will provide fundamentally and primarily for language and communication development by the inclusion of a Communication Plan or by embedding the Communication Plan information into all parts of the IFSP/IEP.</p>	<p>II.3 Develop written and web-based guidelines for professionals and paraeducators and interveners who provide early intervention services to children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families.</p>	<p>II.3 Each agency, program, and provider of early intervention services to infants and toddlers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have at least one staff member (or access to a resource person) who is highly qualified in the areas of hearing loss and deaf-blindness, the impact of deafness and deaf-blindness on child development and family dynamics, and the central role of language and communication acquisition in the child’s development.</p>
	<p>II.4 In collaboration with the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), create a Communication Plan for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, to be completed by all IFSP/IEP teams and attached to all IFSPs/IEPs of children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>II.4 Compliance monitoring will reveal that 100 percent of all IFSPs/IEPs designed for children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind contain a Communication Plan or have the components embedded.</p>

III. Family Involvement

System Goal: All families in Pennsylvania will be provided with comprehensive, balanced, and accurate information; services; training; and advocacy to ensure that their children develop age-appropriate language and communication skills and to address the many developmental, linguistic, family, and educational issues that are central to child development.

Background: Families are the initial, primary, and most important resource for newborns, infants, and toddlers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and therefore must be fully informed about hearing loss or deaf-blindness, its consequences, and the services and programs available to them and their children. Families should become knowledgeable about hearing loss or deaf-blindness, language and communication development, the relationship between language and communication development and educational growth, and the full array of appropriate services and programs (National Agenda, 2003).

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
<p>III.1 Following the identification of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, all families will have access to rich and balanced information regarding the extent and meaning of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, language and communication options, and other services available to assist families in addressing these issues.</p>	<p>III.1 Create a system or modify an existing system to document that families have received information concerning the extent and meaning of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, communication and language options, and other services available to assist families in addressing these issues throughout the full continuum of services.</p>	<p>III.1 All families of infants, toddlers, and young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind receive information concerning the extent and meaning of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, communication and language options, and other services available to assist families in addressing these issues at all IFSP/IEP meetings. Families of infants, toddlers, and young children will receive information on the Deaf-Blind Initiative.</p>
<p>III.2 Language and communication development will be the driving forces behind IFSP/IEP development.</p>	<p>III.2 Ensure that for children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind at least one member of each IFSP/IEP team has a background in the education of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and especially in the areas of language and communication development.</p>	<p>III.2 All families will be able to explain their language and communication choices and be able to support their children's language and communication development.</p>
<p>III.3 Family preferences for such issues as language and communication choices, location of services, and choice of service providers will be given primary consideration by IFSP/IEP teams.</p>	<p>III.2.3 Establish information and support programs to ensure that all families with children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have access to workshops, symposia, and other activities to include information or transition.</p>	<p>III.3 Families of children/students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are active and knowledgeable participants in their children's IFSP/IEP meetings.</p>
<p>III.4 All families will have opportunities to meet and interact with other families of children with hearing loss or deaf-blindness.</p>	<p>III.3 Prepare families of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind to participate in the IFSP/IEP process. Develop a family-friendly training manual and procedures to meet this need and to be able to transition smoothly from one year to the next.</p>	<p>III.3 All families receive information in a format that meets their native language and communication needs and is in family-friendly formats.</p>
	<p>III.4 Create a statewide parent/family network to offer opportunities for families to meet and work together.</p>	<p>III.4 A website is established where families of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind can access information on resources, technology, and interactions with other families. Families of children who are deaf-blind will have access to the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Listserv.</p>
		<p>III.4 A statewide conference or regional conferences especially for parents and families of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will be held annually.</p>

IV. Placements and Programs

System Goal: Every student who is deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have access to a full continuum of placement options that provide for the student’s language, communication, educational, social/emotional, cultural, and technological needs; opportunities for direct communication with peers and adults; role models; and the support services necessary for full language and communication access and age appropriate language and communication development.

Background: Placement and program determinations impact upon children from birth to age twenty-one. The make-up and location of early intervention/educational programs for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are among the most important determinations made by IFSP/IEP teams. Because deafness and deaf-blindness are low incidence conditions, providing a language-rich environment in which there is a critical mass of age and language peers and staff members capable of communicating directly and easily is of paramount importance. This is true whether the child has a mild or profound loss; whether the child is two or twelve years of age; whether the child uses spoken, signed language, or augmentative communication systems. Thus it is crucial that all placement and program decisions be language- and communication-driven. For students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, the least restrictive environment is one where all of the elements described here are carefully considered and become part of childrens’/students’ IFSPs/IEPs.

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
<p>IV.1 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families will have available a full continuum of program options in which the general education curriculum is fully accessible and in which there are high standards and expectations for all students.</p>	<p>IV.1.2 Develop programs for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind that provide for a critical mass of language/communication and age peers, assist children in developing age-appropriate language and communication skills, and provide educational environments in which students have full access to language rich environments where they can communicate directly with peers and adults.</p>	<p>IV.1 All early intervention programs and local education agencies offer families a full continuum of placement options for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind including accurate and up-to-date information about all placement options.</p>
<p>IV.2 All responsible entities will offer access to a full continuum of program/educational placement options based on the individual student’s unique communication, language, educational, and social needs. These options will be offered regardless of location, cost, or general philosophical preferences.</p>	<p>IV.2 Train and monitor local programs to ensure that a full continuum of programs and educational placement options are fairly presented and offered to all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families and ensure families are fully prepared for pivotal transitions along the way.</p>	<p>IV.1.2 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have access to the general education curriculum/early learning standards in their preferred languages and modalities through direct communication at adult language levels and/or through highly qualified interpretation or transliteration.</p>
<p>IV.3 Prior to an IFSP/IEP meeting, the responsible entity will provide balanced information to all team members, especially parents and students, concerning all program/ placement options. IFSP/IEP teams will give particular emphasis to family preferences and will include children/ students in as many meaningful ways as possible.</p>	<p>IV.1.2 Develop interpreter and intervener standards and implement training opportunities to support educational interpreters and interveners in meeting those standards.</p>	<p>IV.1.2 The provision of highly qualified educational interpreters and interveners as defined by state regulations and required by IEPs is based on each individual child’s language and communication access needs, preferences, and linguistic functioning.</p>
<p>IV.4 All IFSP/IEP teams will fully consider the unique language and communication needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and the special factors identified in IDEA. Any determination of the least restrictive or natural environment will reflect these unique needs.</p>	<p>IV.1.3 Create a system or modify an existing system to disseminate information and to document that all IFSP/IEP team members have received information concerning the extent and meaning of hearing loss and deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss and deaf-blindness, communication and language options, and their impact upon placement options and all topics related to transition.</p> <p>IV.4 IFSP/IEP teams will receive guidance related to how proposed programs/placements meet students’ language and communication needs and how to develop Communication Plans for IFSPs/IEPs.</p>	<p>IV.3.4 At all IFSP/IEP meetings, team members receive information concerning the extent and meaning of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss or deaf-blindness, communication and language options, the full continuum of programs and placement options, transition supports, and other services available to assist families in addressing these issues.</p>
		<p>IV.1.2.3.4 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have full access to language rich environments, programs, and placements that meet their unique communication and language needs and that facilitate and support the development of age appropriate language and communication proficiencies.</p>

V. Technology

System Goal: All general educators, early intervention professionals, special educators, parents, and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have access to information concerning technological advances, will be trained in their usage, and will be provided with such technologies as appropriate and necessary for full access to learning environments and students' well-being and safety.

Background: Students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, including those with multiple disabilities, receive instruction in a variety of settings – family homes, early intervention, child care, public schools, regional programs, and schools for the deaf and blind. Schools and programs serving these students must address three forms of technology: 1) technology designed for the general populace to facilitate the learning process and prepare students to meet the challenges of the future; 2) technology designed specifically for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind to ensure full access to the learning community; and 3) technology necessary to ensure student safety in all learning environments.

Goals	Actions	Outcomes
<p>V.1 All general educators; special educators; early intervention staff; service providers; parents; and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have access to information concerning technological advances that enhance the education of students with hearing loss or deaf-blindness.</p>	<p>V.1.2.3 Identify individuals within each local educational agency who are responsible for staying apprised of technology advancements; are capable of evaluating, troubleshooting, and servicing technology; and who share information with students, families, and staff members, especially during transition periods.</p>	<p>V.1 A website is established that general educator; special educators; early intervention staff; service providers; parents; and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind can access to obtain information on technology.</p>
<p>V.2 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have appropriate instructional and assistive technology to support their individual visual, auditory, or tactile learning needs; to facilitate communication; to provide access to literacy models; and to enhance developmental/ educational outcomes.</p>	<p>V.1.2 Ensure that all educational programs serving students who have parents who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have the technology necessary to allow educators and students to communicate with those parents about school and for the parents to have full access to all activities in the school community.</p>	<p>V.1.2.3 All educational environments serving students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are fully accessible with up-to-date technology and personnel trained in the use of these technologies.</p>
<p>V.3 Each responsible entity will identify individuals who are knowledgeable about technology available for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; who are responsible for staying apprised of technology advancements and assessment protocols; and who will support IFSP/IEP team members and instructional staff in identifying and utilizing appropriate instructional and assistive technology throughout a child's full academic program.</p>	<p>V.1.3 Create a system or modify an existing system to disseminate information and to document that all IFSP/IEP team members have received information concerning the extent and meaning of hearing loss and deaf-blindness, the communication and linguistic consequences of hearing loss and deaf-blindness, communication and language options, and their impact upon placement options.</p>	<p>V.1.3 A directory and network of individuals responsible for assistive technology for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will be developed, updated annually, and made available online.</p>
<p>V.4 All students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will be educated in environments that have the technology available to ensure their safety, including full access to all alerting, emergency, or announcement systems.</p>	<p>V.4 Create a checklist to evaluate school environments for the adequacy of alerting systems, emergency announcement systems, and signage with respect to providing a safe environment for all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>V.4 All educational facilities will have the required and appropriate alerting, announcement, and emergency systems necessary to ensure the safety of all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>

VI. System Responsibility: Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

System Goal: Pennsylvania will develop a clear and effective method for monitoring the educational progress of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, including measures of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and high stakes testing. Assessment protocols will recognize the need for accommodations while maintaining the highest standards and expectations. Students who are deaf-blind have unique learning and communication needs that may make typical assessments unreliable and may not be a true assessment of the student’s skills.

Background: Students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are entitled to educational programs in which system-wide responsibility and accountability are clear, and in which developmental/ educational assessments take into account the unique language and communication needs of these students. Since high stakes tests are designed for hearing students, students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind need to be provided with accommodations and modifications to demonstrate educational progress. Overall indicators of progress, including measures of AYP, must likewise take into account the unique characteristics and needs of learners who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
<p>VI.1 (System Responsibility) The Pennsylvania compliance monitoring system will monitor all responsible entities in the commonwealth to ensure that all federal (IDEA) and state regulations are followed and that the language and communication needs described in Goal Area I are understood and fully and appropriately addressed in the IFSP/IEP process.</p>	<p>VI.1 Develop a system to monitor the Communication Plan information included in the IFSP/IEP documents of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VI.1 A website is established that general educators; special educators; service providers; parents; and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind can access to obtain information on technology.</p>
<p>VI.2 (Standards) A set of written guidelines and standards for the education of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will be published and updated regularly by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.</p>	<p>VI.1.2 Update and maintain written guidelines and standards for educating students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VI.1 Compliance monitoring reveals that all responsible entities are compliant with the existing federal and state statutes, particularly as they relate to the education of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and the special factors and considerations required by IDEA.</p>
<p>VI.3 (Assessment) All students will be assessed to document and monitor progress using assessments and accommodations described in their IFSP/IEPs and administered by qualified professionals.</p>	<p>VI.3 Establish and coordinate a system for reporting Pennsylvania System of School Assessment/Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment scores to the agencies in which students are educated, as well as their local education agencies.</p>	<p>VI.2 Up-to-date written guidelines and standards for the education of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, focusing on a high-quality, language- and communication-driven educational system, are published and disseminated on a regular basis.</p>
<p>VI.4 (Accountability) All programs offering services to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will implement valid and reliable accountability systems to measure student progress. These systems should reflect the unique language and communication status of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VI.3 Identify appropriate assessment tools driven by student language and learning needs for inclusion in Communication Plans.</p>	<p>VI.3 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment/Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment scores of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are reported to students’ home school districts and educational placements if those placements are out-of-district.</p>
	<p>VI.3 When additional assessments are required, prioritize assessment tools that have appropriate norms for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VI.3 Current written procedures and guidelines for determining assessment accommodations are published and disseminated on a regular basis.</p>
	<p>VI.3 Develop assessment procedures and guidelines for accommodating students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VI.3.4 Multiple assessments and methods of monitoring progress are used accurately to reflect student achievement and growth.</p>
	<p>VI.4 Disaggregate test information for school-age students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind from that of hearing students, and make this data readily available.</p>	

VII. Professional Standards and Preparation

System Goal: Educational, state, early intervention, and community agencies will form collaborative partnerships and develop standards to ensure the preparation, recruitment, retention, and ongoing professional development of personnel serving children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. These standards will recognize the diverse needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, including their unique language and communication access needs. Educators will demonstrate the capacity to communicate effectively, directly, and at an adult level in their students' preferred communication modes and languages. Professionals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will be actively recruited and supported.

Background: Pennsylvania has a shortage of highly qualified personnel who are knowledgeable in educating and providing services to children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Many educators cannot communicate proficiently in one mode of communication (spoken or visual or tactile signed language); often may not have a sense of how to develop auditory, visual, or tactile communication; lack understanding of the continuum of placement options; express confusion over the application of the natural/least restrictive environment to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; and fail to recognize how IDEA's special considerations impact upon the developing child. Finally, professional tests used to secure teacher certification (e.g., the Praxis) represent significant barriers to hiring otherwise qualified individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

Goals	Actions	Outcomes
<p>VII.1 Comprehensive and research-based personnel preparation programs, both inservice and preservice, will be available throughout the commonwealth. These will address the relationship of language development to literacy and to the determination of an appropriate, language-rich, least restrictive environment; the full continuum of placement options for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; and the importance of the special considerations requirements of IDEA, including transitional information.</p>	<p>VII.1.2 Develop and implement a mechanism for communicating with field-based practitioners, parents, and other stakeholders to identify current training topics, including transition.</p>	<p>VII.1 A representative of a Pennsylvania-approved teacher training program is appointed to ERCHL.</p>
<p>VII.2 Pennsylvania will implement certification standards and procedures conducive to recruiting and retaining a diverse professional workforce, including professionals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VII.1 Provide the Bureau of Special Education/Bureau of Early Intervention and existing Pennsylvania teacher preparation programs with data that describes the extent, distribution, and nature of educational personnel needs in Pennsylvania for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>VII.1 Pennsylvania-approved teacher training programs establish an advisory panel consisting of practitioners, parents, and other interested stakeholders.</p>
<p>VII.3 All administrators and coordinators of county early intervention programs will recognize the unique communication needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VII.2 Provide high-quality alternative methods of assessing teacher competencies and securing certification for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VII.1 Personnel preparation programs in Pennsylvania are designed and expanded to meet the demand for qualified educational personnel in all school districts; intermediate units; and special schools for all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; including early intervention.</p>
<p>VII.4 An adequate supply of fully qualified educational interpreters as defined by Pennsylvania Department of Education standards will be available throughout the commonwealth. An adequate supply of fully qualified paraeducators and interveners will be available throughout the commonwealth.</p>	<p>VII.3 Provide special education administrators, county early intervention coordinators, related service providers, and the medical community with ongoing professional development opportunities related to the unique language and communication needs, social and cultural needs, and coping strategies of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VII.2 Increasing numbers of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are recruited, certified, and retained as qualified professionals.</p>
	<p>VII.4 Develop standards and guidelines for educational interpreting and transliteration to be disseminated throughout the commonwealth. Develop standards for interveners for children and youth who are deaf-blind.</p>	<p>VII.3 Training sessions related to the unique communication, language, educational, and social needs of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are offered annually to special education administrators, county early intervention administrators, related service providers, and the medical community.</p>
	<p>VII.4 Provide data to the Deputy Secretary for Higher Education and existing Pennsylvania interpreter preparation programs that describes the extent, distribution, and nature of educational interpreter and intervener needs in Pennsylvania for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>VII.4 Standards for interpreters who interpret or transliterate in educational settings and interveners are included in Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania School Code.</p>
		<p>VII.4 Interpreter training programs in Pennsylvania are designed and expanded to meet the demand for qualified educational interpreters and interveners.</p>

VIII. Collaborative Partnerships

System Goal: Promote collaborative relationships among the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Bureau of Special Education, the Department of Public Welfare, the Department of Human Services, early intervention programs, school districts, intermediate units, schools for the deaf, institutions of higher education, agencies for mental health and intellectual disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation agencies to meet the needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and to provide the leadership for system-wide change and continuous improvement.

Background: Given the central importance of language access and development for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, all individuals, agencies, departments, institutions, and other entities must work collaboratively with one another and with families. Members of the deaf community can play a vital role in this collaboration, serving as models of language and culture in ways that benefit educators and students throughout the life-long instructional process.

Goals

VIII.1 A seamless, collaborative system of information-sharing, data collection, services, and programs will be established among state agencies, educational entities, early intervention, service providers, institutions of higher education, medical communities, and public and private schools and organizations, including deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind community organizations, to meet the unique communication, language, educational, social, and cultural needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and their families, including information and support for transitional times.

Actions

- VIII.1 Establish a mechanism for ongoing and regular dialogue among state agencies, educational entities, early intervention, service providers, institutions of higher education, medical communities, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities, and public and private schools and organizations.
- VIII.1 Generate memoranda of understanding among these agencies to delineate roles, responsibilities, and outcomes.

Outcomes

VIII.1 An interagency, multidisciplinary “collaboration council” consisting of leadership personnel from state agencies, educational entities, service providers, institutions of higher education, medical communities, parents, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind community organizations, public and private schools and agencies, and organizations involved directly or indirectly in the education of infants, toddlers, children, and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind is established by the Bureau of Special Education and meets at least annually.

IX. Deaf-Blindness

Systems Goal: All students who are deaf-blind will be educated in a language rich environment that allows access to information to promote educational success and social interactions through their individualized communication systems.

Background: Students who are deaf-blind present unique learning styles and needs. Although typical students receive 80 to 95 percent of their information through vision and hearing, children and youth who are deaf-blind do not have access to this information or have limited or incomplete access. Many children who are deaf-blind have limited use of symbolic language. They may communicate using tactile cues, gestures, pictures, objects and sign language.

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
IX.1 Parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing will be offered information about educating students with deaf-blindness in a variety of settings.	IX.1.3 Pennsylvania-sponsored conferences regarding students who are deaf/hard of hearing or students who are blind/visually impaired will consider offering at least one session or workshop per conference and other opportunities for parents of children who are deaf-blind.	IX.1.2 Parents and practitioners will receive information on the topic of educating students with deaf-blindness.
IX.2 Seamless and quality educational services for all students with deaf-blindness will be offered.	IX.1.2 ERCHL will collaborate with members of the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Initiative regularly to identify ways ERCHL can support the Initiative and communicate information about the Initiative.	IX.2 All students will receive appropriate educational supports and services in an environment that meets their needs.
IX.3 Students who are deaf-blind will have resources and opportunities to use an effective communication system that may include using an intervener.	IX.2.3 Quality indicators will be developed that promote an access-rich educational environment for students who are deaf-blind.	IX.1.3 All children who are deaf-blind will be afforded an appropriate means of access to the educational environment.
	IX.3 ERCHL will collaborate with state entities such as the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Initiative to develop a recommendation for a definition of intervener, position qualifications, requirements, and training programs.	

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor

