

The New Deaf Education Guidelines: What You Need to Know

What are the guidelines? “Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines” is a document that spells out what states, local districts, and schools should be doing to ensure deaf and hard of hearing students achieve outcomes on par with those of their peers.

Who wrote the guidelines? The guidelines were written by a team of experts from a range of perspectives and practices in education. They worked under the umbrella of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, which published them.

What are the “essential principles” of the guidelines?

1. Each student is unique.
2. High expectations drive educational programming and future employment opportunities.
3. Families are critical partners.
4. Early language development is critical to cognition, literacy and academic achievement.
5. Specially designed instruction is individualized.
6. Least restrictive environment (LRE) is student-based.
7. Educational progress must be carefully monitored.
8. Access to peers and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing is critical.
9. Qualified providers are critical to a child’s success.
10. State leadership and collaboration is essential.

How do we make sure the guidelines actually are implemented?

The guidelines come with a tool to support implementation. The “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program and Service Review Checklist” guides individuals and agencies in evaluating their programs to make sure they comply with the law and with best practices. The tool is based on evaluation of the ten essential principals. Where gaps in the program are noted, individuals and agencies can fill out the accompanying template to develop a plan for improvement.

Sounds great! How do I get started?

1. Make sure everyone you know in special education and deaf education has a copy. The guidelines can be downloaded for free from <https://www.nasdse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9v8pO3R7Nzk%3d&tabid=36>. Share the link on all your social media – Facebook Twitter, Instagram, and anything else you use. Repost and retweet messages about the guidelines from others. Print out the guidelines, put them in a binder, and hand it to education decision makers in your state, district, and school.

2. Work with others to make sure they are implemented. Ask your state director of special education what he or she is doing to adopt the guidelines in your state. Keep in

mind that the guidelines were published by the state directors' professional organization (National Association of State Directors of Special Education www.nasdse.org), so your state director should be familiar with them.

Contact your district and local special education and deaf education directors and find out what they are doing to implement the guidelines. Encourage parents and other advocates to use the guidelines as an advocacy tool.

3. Make sure the "Program and Service Review Checklist" is completed at the state, district, and school level. Directions and easy-to-use templates are included in the document.

The guidelines are an excellent mechanism to improve the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. Let's use them to the fullest extent possible.

Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.

– Helen Keller

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