Metro Regional Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Enhancement Services for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Executive Summary Plan

Submitted to:
Doug D. Christensen
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4987

Submitted by:
The Metro Regional Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

On behalf of
School Districts, Educational Service Units and Regional Cooperatives in the Metro Regional Program area

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Member Agencies with the Metro Regional Program include:

Educational Service Unit #2 serving: Archbishop Bergan, Ashland-Greenwood, Bishop Neumann Wahoo, Cedar Bluffs, Clear Creek, Dodge, Fremont Public, Logan View Schools, Lyons-Decatur, Mead, North Bend Central, Oakland-Craig, Prague Public, Scribner-Snyder, Tekamah-Herman, Wahoo, West Point, Wisner-Pilger, Yutan

Educational Service Unit #3 serving: Arlington Public Schools, Bellevue Public Schools, Bennington Public Schools, Blair Community Schools, Conestoga Public Schools, Elkhorn Public Schools, Elmwood Murdock Public Schools, Fort Calhoun, Community Schools, Gretna Public Schools, Louisville Public Schools, Millard Public Schools, Papillion-LaVista Public Schools, Plattsmouth Public Schools, Ralston Public Schools, South Sarpy District 46, Valley Public Schools, Waterloo Public Schools, Weeping Water Public Schools, Westside Community Schools

Educational Service Unit #19 serving the Omaha Public Schools
Introduction:

At the present time, the State of Nebraska is divided into four regions. Each region serves children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HH) birth to 21 years old within its geographical boundaries. These regions were created when the State Board of Education approved the *Statewide Educational Programs and Support Services for Children Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, (June 1997).

The Metro Regional Program for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MRP) is the smallest geographical region. However, over one-third of the children who are Deaf and HH from the State of Nebraska reside in the MRP educational area. Due to the large number of children who are Deaf and HH, three educational programs exist in the MRP area. Omaha Public Schools, Westside Public Schools, and the Suburban Schools Program are set up to serve these children. These programs have benefited in a variety of ways since the MRP was established. The MRP focuses on three specific areas that help provide children who are Deaf and HH. They are as follows: educational services, outreach services and enhancement services through the MRP. Specific details regarding each of these areas can be found throughout the rest of this proposal.
Metro Regional Program Role

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 birth to 21 years (B-21). The Metro Regional Program will:

   • Maintain an email distribution list of Deaf educators, interpreters, administrators, speech language pathologist throughout the Metro Regional Program area. This list is used to notify professionals of upcoming training opportunities, activities, etc.
   • Maintain an email directory of staff members in the Metro Regional Program area working with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
   • Maintain an email distribution list of children. This list is used to notify children of upcoming activities, events, etc.
   • Share information with other regional coordinators at monthly meetings and via email for state wide distribution.
   • Attend bi-annual state wide meetings with administrators and program coordinators to update on Regional Programs’ activities.
   • Distribute information to parents concerning upcoming events/activities.
   • Maintain a working relationship with Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH).
   • Coordinate with colleges (UNO, UNL, Front Range etc.) about training opportunities for Deaf education and interpreter training.
   • Attend regional and state (NASES - Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors) meetings for input from area Special Education Directors
   • Provide interpreter mentor service to interpreters and Deaf educators in the MRP region and coordinate training utilizing Boys Town National Research Hospital Outreach services.
   • Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues.
   • Communicate with NDE Director of Programs for Children with Sensory Impairments.
   • Provide transition and post-secondary information to staff members.
   • Attend meetings with the three Deaf education program district representatives in the MRP area a minimum of 4 (four) times during the school year.
   • Provide activities that get children together to develop relationships.
   • Distribute information from MRP through the Deaf educators serving the children.
   • Distribute a quarterly newsletter to staff, parents, children, administrators and involved community members.
   • Provide interaction opportunities for Deaf educators and interpreters to meet and discuss issues.
   • Continue to host Advisory Council meetings with representatives from the Omaha Public Schools, Suburban Schools Program, Westside Schools, ESU#3, parents representing a full range of student communication needs, and community members.

2. The Regional Programs will cooperatively plan and coordinate student activities to provide opportunities for socialization through a unique and shared mode of communication. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

   • Employ an activity coordinator whose purpose will be to plan age appropriate activities for children B-21 monthly during the school year.
   • Attend Regional Program meetings to organize state and regional activities for children.
3. The Regional Programs will develop summer educational experiences. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

- Provide opportunities for MRP staff and others associated with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to give suggestions for activities.
- Distribute information to Deaf educators on upcoming activities.
- Allow student input for activities.

4. The Regional Programs will encourage family involvement in educational and social activities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

- Invite parents to activities
- Provide a minimum of two (2) family oriented activities per school year.
- Provide transportation for children to state wide activities.
- Provide lodging for some activities/workshops that require traveling as per approval.
- Communicate with parents/guardians about the value of their children’ attendance at activities.
- Provide family sign classes in a variety of locations throughout the MRP area to maximize the family’s comfort in learning sign language.
- Provide information about our lending library and distribute catalogs.

5. Each Regional Program will promote excellence and equality for all children (B-21) in Nebraska who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

- Assist school districts with program development
- Assist school districts with recruiting and hiring qualified personnel to serve children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Provide funding for staff recruitment.
- Contract for counseling services for Deaf or Hard of Hearing children or employ a K-12 counselor, competent in Deafness and signing to serve children in the MRP area.
- Assist parents by supplying contact information for various area educational programs, upon request.
- Provide professional development for staff and administrators, upon request.
- Participate as a consultant to IEP teams, when requested.
- Provide guidance for better access to higher education programs for Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.
- Maintain FM systems available for loan to districts.
- Maintain and update the Lending Library with materials for school district use.
- Encourage professionals (regular educators, speech language pathologist, etc) to obtain a Deaf education endorsement and provide information about endorsement programs.
- Make assistive technology options known to professionals, parents and children.
• Provide funds to purchase needed educational materials specific individualized instruction to children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• 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.
• Provide social activities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• Network professionals that work with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• Assist with vocational guidance, job shadowing, mentoring, and training opportunities for children ages 16-21.
• Provide information about work experience programs and networking with Vocational Rehabilitation.

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

• Maintain and update information concerning existing programs and services in the MRP and state.
• Share information with Special Education Administrators and service providers about existing programs.
• Maintain an open line of communication with the Special Education Directors, Superintendents and principals.
• Assist districts in alternative placements along the continuum, upon request.
• Attend IEP meetings for districts at residential placements, upon request.
• Contract for counseling services for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or employ a K-12 counselor, competent in Deafness and signing to serve children in the MRP area.
• Employ an activity coordinator to plan age appropriate activities for student B-21 monthly during the school year.
• Offer a variety of sign language classes throughout the MRP area for professional and community members.
• Host a transition conference to provide information to parents and children regarding various transitions of a student’s life, including but not limited to, school to post-secondary, school to work and preschool to school.
• Continue to assist and support the NSD Alumni Center.

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. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Continue to support programs that enhance the early education for children 0-5 years old.
• MRP area will have on staff an activity coordinator to plan age appropriate activities for student B-21 monthly during the school year.
• Organize and fund peer activities for children throughout the MRP area.
• Provide activities that vary in subject and location from year to year.
• Provide activities that offer opportunities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to meet their peers in their region and throughout the state. While these activities have varied slightly, the following statewide activities have occurred annually: □ Fall Activity – sponsored by the Metro Regional Program
  □ Elementary Extravaganza – sponsored by the Northeast Regional Program
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). To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

- Coordinate with colleges and universities to provide classes as needed or requested for interpreters and Deaf educators.
- Remain current in assistive listening technology such as but not limited to Cochlear Implants.
- Provide opportunities for attendance at national and state conferences.
- Provide financial assistance to attend national conferences specific to the education of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Provide financial assistance for attendance at training opportunities supported by Metro Regional Program.
- Provide financial assistance for training opportunities approved by Metro Regional Program.
- Bring in experts in the field to provide inservice to staff.
- Provide sign language classes to professionals.
- Coordinate with other regions to allow access to training opportunities statewide.
- Capitalize on expertise of state and regional staff available for training and sharing of information.
- Provide training opportunities for speech language pathologists, resource teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators involved with the education of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Coordinate with colleges and universities to provide classes that pertain to educating children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Provide opportunities to attend workshops and trainings on Cochlear Implants and other updates in technology.
- Provide ongoing staff development and training in the area of children who are multi-disabled Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- Provide information and staff development regarding Deaf culture and sign language as a language.
- Provide information where ASL instruction for children, staff and families is available.

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. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

- Coordinate with Boys Town National Research Hospital (BTNRH) staff for interpreter mentoring.
• Recruit people to become interpreters
• Maintain information about interpreters working in the MRP area.
• Provide financial support for EIPA testing until interpreters meet RULE 51 criteria. Interpreters must meet Rule 51 in first 3 years of employment.
• Assist ASK 12 with EIPA testing.
• Provide NDE with current interpreter skill level information.
• Maintain working relationships with 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.
• Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues.
• Coordinate with BTNRH and University of Nebraska Omaha to provide workshops throughout the MRP area 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. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• The Metro Regional Program will have a lending library with equipment utilized by children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• Develop a directory of professionals in the MRP area that specialize in working with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

11. Each Regional Program will assist in identifying the availability of specialized technological equipment. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Continue to provide school related Audiologist and audiological support.
• Provide assistive technology information and equipment to school districts within the region. (For example: ADA requirements; lighted alarms; TTY; auditory trainers/FM systems; caption decoders; etc.)
• 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 audiologist to assist in obtaining equipment and the setting of equipment
• Provide funding for attendance at cochlear implant workshops.
• Develop inservices/workshops to inform parents and professionals of ongoing audiological advances including cochlear implants.

12. Each Regional Program will serve as a clearinghouse of specialized materials and information relating to individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Maintain and update a lending library.
• Maintain a process for distributing and collecting materials and equipment.
• Have current periodicals available for check out.
• Maintain information about current list serves.
• Provide information about specific materials and purchasing information.
• Maintain a separate technology lending library for children and families.
• Provide information on assessment and evaluation techniques.

13. Each Regional Program will serve as a resource to families, children, and school districts. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Provide information to parents through Deaf educators serving children.
• Maintain a lending library, which includes materials that are available to all staff, parents and children with an interest in sign language or hearing loss.
• Update and distribute the current lending library catalog.
• Maintain an email distribution list of professionals that work with Deaf or Hard of Hearing children in the schools including but not limited to: Deaf educators, interpreters, administrators, counselors, audiologists and speech language pathologists throughout the Metro Regional Program area. This list is used to notify of upcoming training opportunities, activities etc.
• Provide mentor service to interpreters and Deaf educators in the Metro Regional Program area
• Coordinate training opportunities for Deaf educators and interpreters.
• Distribute a newsletter to staff, parents, children and administrators.
• Provide sign language classes for professionals, parents and extended families, and community members interested in learning sign language.
• Contract for counseling services for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or employ a K-12 counselor, competent in Deafness and signing to serve children in the MRP area.
• 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 a line of open communication with Special Education Directors and superintendents.
• Assist districts in alternative placement along the continuum, upon request.
• Attend IEP meetings for districts at residential placements, upon request.
• Provide training opportunities for Deaf educators, interpreters as well as speech language 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 meeting the requirements of Rule 51.
• Provide information to districts/administrators concerning interpreter qualifications and skill levels.
• Participate in interpreter interview teams, when requested.
• Assist with recruiting for open positions.
• Provide consultation to school districts on interpreter issues.
• The Activity Coordinator will serve as a family liaison to assist families of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

14. Each Regional Program will provide technical assistance and assist the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) with statewide initiatives. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Attendance at monthly coordinator meetings with a NDE representative
• Coordinate with the Deaf/Blind project for training specific to Deaf/blindness
• Coordinate with other agencies to provide training.
• Coordinate with the Early Childhood Training Center to provide training.
• Present information on regional programs at local, state and national conferences.
• Continue communication with the Director of Sensory Impairments.
• Provide a calendar of events to the Director of Sensory Impairments each August.
• Maintain the MRP area web page.

15. Each Regional Program will collect and maintain statistical information regarding children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing within their region. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Collect information concerning the number of Deaf educators and interpreters in the MRP region.
• Collect information on the number of children who are Deaf in the region.
• Collect information on the number of children who are Hard of Hearing in the region.
• Collect information about the number of children with cochlear implants.
• Screen appropriate children for Ushers Syndrome and submit reports to the Deaf/blind project.
• Collect evaluation information on activities, workshops and services that MRP provides.

16. Each Regional Program will identify and utilize appropriate Deaf role models for student activities. To accomplish this the Metro Regional Program will:

• Maintain names and addresses of interested role models who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in our region.
• Maintain names and addresses of interested graduates of schools served by the MRP area.
• In cooperation with the other regions, sponsor a reunion of children who graduated from schools served by the regional programs.
• Use the NCDHH as a resource for interested persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• Use UNL, UNO and other colleges and universities as resources.
### Metro Regional Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

#### Timeline of Implementation

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>Revised plan submitted to the Office of Programs for Children with Sensory Impairments for review and approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 11 -</td>
<td>Recommendations from MRP advisory committee are collected and reviewed for the revised MRP plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 24, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 23, 2005</td>
<td>Meet with the MRP Advisory committee and discuss draft of revised plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10, 2004</td>
<td>Revised <em>Statewide Educational Programs and Support Services for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing</em> is approved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Review current MRP plan proposal in anticipation of State revised plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>Metro Regional Program plan implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 15, 1997</td>
<td>Submission of proposal to the Nebraska Department of Education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 11, 1997</td>
<td>A group of metropolitan area representatives met to discuss ways that a regional program could aid in the transition of Nebraska School for the Deaf children, enhance existing programs, improve outreach and meet the needs of the early childhood population. This writing team consisted of representatives (professionals and parents) from Boys Town National Research Hospital, Omaha Public Schools, Westside Community Schools, the Suburban Schools Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, ESU #3, and the Omaha Hearing School.</td>
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