



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## **THE SCOPE OF SERVICE OF PROFESSIONALS IN DEAF EDUCATION**

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
RESOURCE

# The Scope of Service of Professionals in Deaf Education

## Introduction

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are entitled to receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The education and support of students who are Deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) involves a team of specialized professionals, each contributing unique expertise to ensure these students thrive academically and socially. These professionals play distinct yet complementary roles, from providing tailored instruction to facilitating communication and managing auditory technology. Understanding the specific responsibilities of teachers of the Deaf/hard of hearing (TOD), educational interpreters, audiologists who consult in education, and speech-language specialists is crucial for creating a cohesive and effective educational environment for these students.





# Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing

A Teacher of the Deaf (TOD) is an educator with specialized training and expertise tailored to meet the unique needs of DHH students. Their role is distinct from general education teachers or even other special education teachers, focusing on the diverse communication and learning needs of students who are DHH. New Jersey has two separate teaching endorsements for TODs:

- New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) 6A:9B-9.3(b)6ii Teacher of the Deaf Oral/Aural Communication and
- N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-9.3(b)6iii Teacher of the Deaf with Sign Language Communication.

TODs possess specialized training and knowledge:

- **Variability Among DHH Students**

- *Understanding the Range:* TODs recognize that DHH students are not a monolithic group. Each student's needs vary based on their level of hearing, the age at which they lost their hearing, their language acquisition process, and whether they have additional disabilities. Importantly, students with similar hearing levels can have vastly different abilities and needs, and a student's speech clarity does not necessarily indicate their hearing capability or need for sign language.
- *Tailored Approaches:* TODs are trained to tailor their teaching strategies to meet these varying needs.

- **Impact of Specific Hearing Status**

- *Understanding Learning and Communication:* TODs understand how different types and levels of hearing affect each student's ability to learn and communicate. They are adept at recognizing the educational gaps that may arise from missing incidental information and the lack of access to some academic content.
- *Adapted Instruction:* TODs adjust instructional methods to effectively meet the learning needs of students with varying hearing levels.

- **Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT)**

- *Technology Familiarity:* TODs are familiar with various HATs such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and DM/Bluetooth/remote microphone systems.
- *Listening Checks:* Perform listening checks to ensure devices are functioning.
- *Troubleshooting Basics:* They have basic troubleshooting skills to handle common issues, such as device malfunctions caused by dead batteries. When more specialized attention or repairs are required, they contact the audiologist

- **Instructional Techniques**

- *Visual Learning:* TODs incorporate visual aids, sign language, and other non-auditory teaching methods to enhance learning, as applicable.
- *Auditory Training:* TODs provide specific instruction aimed at improving listening skills through a structured hierarchy of auditory training.
- *Multi-Sensory Approaches:* TODs use multi-sensory techniques to improve comprehension and retention of information.

# Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing



- **Learning Needs of Students who are DHH**

- *Language Acquisition*: TODs support the development of language skills, whether through sign language, spoken language, or a combination of both. They are especially mindful of Language Deprivation Syndrome, a critical issue for some children, and are trained to address these gaps.
- *Literacy Skills*: TODs utilize specialized approaches tailored to the needs of DHH learners to help students develop literacy skills.

- **Key Skills and Abilities**

- *Functional Listening Skills*
  - **Functional Listening Assessment**: TODs might evaluate how well students use their residual hearing in various environments through Functional Listening Assessments.
  - **Skill Development**: They implement strategies to improve these functional listening skills.
- *Communication*
  - **Communication Methods**: TODs might be proficient in multiple communication methods, including American Sign Language (ASL), Sign Supported Speech, and Listening and Spoken Language (LSL).
  - **Facilitation**: They facilitate effective communication between students, their peers, teachers, and family members.
- *Comprehension*
  - **Understanding Content**: TODs ensure that students grasp academic content, instructions, and social interactions, recognizing when students struggle with comprehension.
  - **Adaptations**: They make specific adaptations to teaching materials and methods to suit the needs of DHH students, enhancing their understanding.
  - **Test Accommodations**: TODs monitor and ensure test accommodations are appropriate based on the individual student's needs.
- *Self-Advocacy Skills*
  - **Empowerment**: TODs empower students to advocate for their needs in both educational and social settings.
  - **Skill Building**: They help students develop the skills necessary to request accommodations and communicate effectively about their hearing and communication needs.
- *Social Skills*
  - **Social Integration**: TODs support the development of social skills and aid students in integrating into social groups, understanding that social and cultural norms can vary between Deaf and hearing communities.
  - **Peer Interactions**: They facilitate positive interactions between students and their peers, addressing social challenges that may arise, particularly those related to cultural differences and maturity. They also recognize that some social skills may need to be explicitly taught to DHH students.

This comprehensive training allows TODs to provide specialized education that truly meets the needs of DHH students, ensuring they have equitable access to learning and social opportunities.





# Educational Sign Language Interpreter

Educational sign language interpreters provide vital services for students who are DHH in educational settings, from preschool through high school graduation or until they exit at age 21. Careful consideration is necessary for young children who have not yet developed a strong language foundation before relying on interpreters to access their education. Using an interpreter is a skill that must be taught and cultivated over time. In New Jersey, educational interpreters are required to hold certification through the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Assessment (EIPA), as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-14.18.

- **Role:** Educational interpreters are considered Related Service Providers and are integral members of the educational team.
- **Function:** Their primary responsibility is to facilitate communication between the student and others in the educational environment, whether it is during the school day or for extracurricular activities.
- **Responsibilities\*:**
  - Facilitate communication between all members of the school team, interpret instructional content and non-instructional content, classroom environment and peer interaction, both in and out of the classroom.
    - For lengthy classes, such as block schedules, an interpreting team would be appropriate due to the cognitive and physical requirements of the work.
  - Interpret assemblies, field trips and school functions (may mean additional contract time for events outside of the school day).
    - For lengthy presentations, trips or functions an interpreting team would be appropriate due to the cognitive and physical requirements of the work.
  - Adapt interpreting approaches in the language modality identified in the student's IEP and at the language and cognitive level of the student; adaptations may include strategies such as expanding explanation of new vocabulary, repeating and reinforcing new concepts and re-explaining information in a more spatial/ASL-grammatical manner.
  - Assist student(s) and professionals in understanding the role and responsibilities of the interpreter.
  - Facilitate development of age-appropriate use of working with an interpreter.
  - Attend IEP meetings as a member of the team to provide information on the student's use and the benefit of the interpreter. This may necessitate having another interpreter at the meeting if a participant also needs an interpreter.

\*ADAPTED FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION (NASDSE), (2018). OPTIMIZING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING: EDUCATIONAL SERVICE GUIDELINES, 3RD ED. ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA: AUTHOR. AVAILABLE FROM: [WWW.NASDSE.ORG](http://WWW.NASDSE.ORG).



# Educational Sign Language Interpreter

- **Scope\*:** As an IEP team member, the educational interpreter collaborates with the classroom teacher, the TOD and other team members to:
  - Promote student independence and self-advocacy.
  - Encourage direct communication access.
  - Determine appropriate language modality and address concerns related to a student's language, communication, and interpreting needs.
  - Act as a resource for the multidisciplinary team on students working with an interpreter for language modality and the roles and responsibilities of the position.



\*ADAPTED FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION (NASDSE), (2018). OPTIMIZING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING: EDUCATIONAL SERVICE GUIDELINES, 3RD ED. ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA: AUTHOR. AVAILABLE FROM: [WWW.NASDSE.ORG](http://WWW.NASDSE.ORG).



# Audiologist in Education

Audiologists who consult in education support students who are DHH in schools through a range of services outlined in IDEA (34 C.F.R. § 300.34(c)(1)). Their comprehensive approach ensures DHH students can fully participate in and benefit from their education, extending beyond traditional audiological services to address the unique needs of these students in educational settings. Here is a more detailed breakdown of their role:

- **Ensuring Consistent Access to Curricular Content**
  - *Accessibility Assessment:* Ensuring that DHH students have consistent access to curricular content through appropriate accommodations and modifications.
  - *Monitoring:* Regularly monitoring and adjusting strategies to maintain accessibility.
- **Measuring Noise Levels**
  - *Environmental Assessments:* Measuring noise levels in classrooms and other learning environments to ensure they are conducive to hearing and learning.
  - *Recommendations:* Providing recommendations to minimize noise and improve the learning environment.
- **Recommendations to Improve Accessibility**
  - *Tailored Solutions:* Offering tailored solutions to enhance accessibility based on individual student needs and classroom dynamics.
- **Evaluating, Selecting, Fitting, and Dispensing Hearing Assistive Technology (H.A.T.) Devices**
  - *Technology Selection:* Evaluating and selecting appropriate H.A.T. devices, such as DM systems and sound field systems, that are not personal hearing aids.
    - Based on professional scopes of practice in audiology (AAA, 2004; ASHA, 2018), speech-language pathology (ASHA, 2007), and deaf education (CEC, 2018), the audiologist is the only professional that is qualified to fit and verify hearing aids and personal hearing assistance technology.
  - *Fitting and Dispensing:* Ensuring that these devices are properly fitted and dispensed to students.



# Audiologist in Education

- **In-Service Staff Training**
  - *Professional Development:* Conducting in-service training sessions for teachers and staff on the use of H.A.T. devices and other accommodations.
- **Collaboration with the Educational Team**
  - *IEP/504 Plan Development:* Work with teachers, special education staff, and other related service providers during the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans that address the specific needs of students who are DHH.
- **Examples of Specific Services:**
  - *Classroom Observation:* Observing students in their classroom environments to identify potential barriers to communication and learning.
  - *Accommodations Recommendation:* Recommending specific accommodations, such as note-takers, captioning, or real-time transcription services, to support students' learning.
  - *Counseling:* Providing counseling to students on how to advocate for their own needs and cope with the social and emotional impacts of hearing loss or auditory processing disorders.

Audiologists in education play a vital role in bridging the gap between students who are DHH and their educational success. By providing specialized knowledge and services, they help ensure that these students have equitable access to education.





# Speech-Language Specialist



A speech-language specialist (SLS) or a speech-language pathologist (SLP) plays a critical role in supporting DHH students by addressing their communication needs and helping them develop effective language and speech skills. Their responsibilities include:

- **Assessing Communication Skills:** They evaluate the speech, language and communication abilities of DHH students, considering factors like auditory skills, spoken language, and sign language proficiency.
- **Developing Communication Plans:** Based on assessments, SLSs/SLPs create individualized communication plans tailored to each student's needs, whether the focus is on spoken language, sign language, or a combination of both.
- **Providing Therapy:** SLSs/SLPs deliver speech and language therapy to help DHH students improve articulation, vocabulary, syntax, and overall communication skills. This may involve auditory training for students who use hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- **Collaborating with Other Professionals:** They work closely with TODs, audiologists who consult in education, and educational interpreters to ensure that communication goals are integrated into the student's overall education plan. SLSs/SLPs also work in collaboration with other professionals when completing the communication plan for a DHH student's IEP or 504.
- **Supporting Language Development:** SLSs/SLPs may assist in developing language skills, whether through spoken language, sign language, or both, depending on the student's needs and communication preferences.
- **Educating and Training Staff and Families:** They provide training and support to educators, parents, and other professionals on strategies to facilitate communication and language development for DHH students.

The role of a SLS/SLP for DHH students is to ensure that these students can effectively communicate and access language in ways that best suit their individual needs, thereby enhancing their overall academic and social success.

# Summary

While the roles of professionals in DHH education may overlap, Teachers of the Deaf (TODs), educational interpreters, audiologists who consult in education, and Speech-Language Specialists (SLSSs)/Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) each have distinct responsibilities. TODs provide specialized instruction and support for DHH students but do not typically serve as interpreters. Educational interpreters facilitate communication between spoken and sign language, without teaching academic content. SLSSs/SLPs focus on communication, language, and listening skills but do not recommend Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT). Audiologists who consult in education manage students' auditory needs, including the selection and management of HAT. Recommendations for HAT fall exclusively within the audiologist's scope of expertise, not that of TODs, interpreters, or SLSSs/SLPs. Clear role distinctions and collaboration among these professionals are essential for providing comprehensive support to DHH students.

