

Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) State Legislation

ACTION REQUESTED

Ensure parents have the right to decide the most appropriate language and/or communication method for their child who is deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) and support building a strong language foundation for kindergarten readiness and future academic success.

ASHA encourages lawmakers to pass legislation that includes these principles and tasks the state department education or health (lead agency) in charge of early intervention programs to develop a parent resource that includes the following:

- developmental language/literacy milestones for children who are D/HH;
- appropriate assessments for children who are D/HH and use visual and/or spoken language; and
- early intervention resources, services, and supports that help children benefit from their educational program and demonstrate successful outcomes.

The resource should be distributed and made available to medical professionals and programs, early intervention and preschool programs, parent resource centers, and school districts throughout the state. Developing a comprehensive, fair, and balanced parent resource provides families with the tools they need to be impactful members of their child's individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP) team and reaffirms the decision-making authority of the team under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

ISSUE: Ensure parents have the right to decide the most appropriate language and/or communication method for their child who is D/HH

ASHA and the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (known as LEAD-K) support efforts to ensure that children who are D/HH have a strong language foundation for success in school. While LEAD-K supports establishing advisory committees to gather existing resources and advise the state on educating children who are D/HH, ASHA supports requiring the state lead agency(s) to develop a parent resource that is widely distributed and empowers parents to be impactful members on their child's IFSP/IEP team.

SOLUTION: Create a resource to help families understand developmental milestones, educational options, services, and supports for children who are D/HH

ASHA supports the family's right to decide on the appropriate language and/or communication method for their child who is D/HH and their family, and that children who are D/HH have a strong language foundation. ASHA supports the creation of a resource to help families understand developmental milestones, educational options, services, and supports. ASHA maintains that the proposed advisory committees are duplicative and unnecessary and recommends that the state legislature require the state lead agency(s) to develop the parent resource. Given that much of the information currently exists, the agency could identify experts within the state to advise the agency on the creation of the resource. ASHA maintains that once the resource is widely distributed, families will be empowered to be impactful participants in the IFSP/IEP process.

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