

# UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Subject:**

ACTION: DeafEd Alternate Pathway to Professional Educator Licensing (APPEL)

**Agenda item type:**

Action Item

**Recommended Action:**

**Motion for the Board:** That the Board approve USDB as an authorized APPEL sponsor for Deaf Education (Birth–22) and authorizes USDB to implement the program in accordance with Utah Code §53E-6-306 and Rules R277-303 and R277-304.

**Purpose of Memo:**

Staff recommendation

**Background:**

USDB's proposed APPEL will:

- Provide an alternative pathway to licensure for candidates seeking to serve students who are deaf and hard of hearing (birth - 22).
- Stabilize Deaf Education programs statewide by expanding and retaining a qualified workforce.
- Ensure all candidates meet the standards outlined in R277-514 (Deaf Education Licensing) and the Utah Effective Educator Standards.

This program aligns with USBE's APPEL framework already established for Special Education and other license areas and adapts it to the unique needs of Deaf Education.

Over the past decade, the number of university programs in Utah preparing teachers of the Deaf has dwindled from two institutions in the State of Utah to a single operating program. This mirrors a national trend of decline in Deaf Education teacher preparation programs. Across the country, these specialized programs are struggling to maintain enrollment, faculty, and funding, leading to a critical shortage of qualified teachers who can serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing students.

USDB, as the state's designated public education provider for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, has faced increasing difficulty recruiting and retaining licensed Teachers of the Deaf. The shortage has resulted in an overreliance on emergency authorizations and out-of-state recruitment, both of which are unsustainable solutions for a statewide education system that serves children from birth through age 22.

To address this urgent need, USDB and the Utah State Board of Education have collaborated over the past several years to design a [Deaf Education APPEL program](#). This program was very recently approved by USBE staff and provides an alternative route for qualified individuals to earn full professional licensure while being mentored and evaluated through a rigorous, competency-based framework.

## Program Overview

The proposed USDB Deaf Education APPEL Program is designed to:

- Build a sustainable pipeline of licensed Teachers of the Deaf across Utah.
- Maintain high professional and instructional standards aligned with Deaf Education competencies established by USBE.
- Provide a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) for each participant that includes coursework, mentoring, and ongoing performance evaluation.
- Support USBE's mission to expand access to high-quality educators in hard-to-staff specialized fields.

The program will operate under the oversight of USDB and will adhere to all requirements outlined in R277-303 (Educator Preparation Programs) and R277-304 (Educator Licensing – Associate and Professional Educator Licenses).

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### Attachments:

1. DRAFT - APPEL Model Program Framework for Deaf Ed License Area (1)
2. APPEL PLP Checklist for Deaf Ed (2)- Draft