

INTRODUCTION

Communication and language are the foundations of learning. Students who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing access communication in a variety of ways. It is important for teams, including students and families, to gather and share information about a student's language, communication, and access. This Language and Communication Plan is a tool to facilitate a meaningful discussion among IEP or 504 team members that leads to action.

A series of laws pertain to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing students. These include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, in November 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education issued the document "Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students With Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools" (DOJ-DOE FAQ). This document reflects many of the questions parents, families, teachers, service providers, and administrators may have regarding the communication needs of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing students.

This Language and Communication Plan incorporates these laws. It is organized into the following five sections: (i) Language and Communication Needs, (ii) Services, Hearing Technology, and Visual/Auditory Accommodations, (iii) Expanded Support Services, (iv) Continuous Communication Access, and (v) Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Considerations. Careful consideration of each section of this plan will allow IEP and 504 teams to feel confident as they plan for successful and meaningful access for students in the educational setting.

ABOUT: This document is a model Language and Communication Plan developed for consideration by the Utah State Board of Education as a starting point for discussion and refinement. It was prepared by Sara Williams, an attorney at the Disability Law Center. The model is grounded in federal law and informed by research, conversations with states currently implementing similar plans, and feedback and collaboration from Utah administrators, parents, service providers, and members of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

For any questions or clarifications, please reach out to Sara directly at swilliams@disabilitylawcenter.org.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name: DOB: Date:

Team members completing the plan (state name and role):

Left Ear Hearing Loss:

☐ None ☐ Mild ☐ Moderate ☐ Severe +

Right Ear:

☐ None ☐ Mild ☐ Moderate ☐ Severe +

Does the student have additional disabilities that impact communication? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please list them here and explain the impact:

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION NEEDS*

Using the key below, indicate the student's observed [language\(s\)](#). Only mark those that apply.

Key: Always = A; Often = O; Sometimes = S

Student's Languages	Home		During Instruction		Non-Instructional Settings		Notes
	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	
American Sign Language (ASL)							
English							
Other Spoken Language(s) (specify in Notes)							
Other Signed Language(s) (specify in Notes)							
No Formal Language							

Using the key below, mark the student's observed communication modes. Only mark those that apply. Key: Always = A; Often = O; Sometimes = S

Student's Communication Modes	Home		During Instruction		Non-Instructional Settings		Notes
	<u>Exp.</u>	<u>Rec.</u>	Exp.	Rec.	Exp.	Rec.	
ASL							
Communication Device							
Fingerspelling							
Gestures/Home Signs							
Lipreading							
Listening + Spoken Language							
Object/Picture System							
Tactile sign language							
Touch cues							
Written or brailled English							
Other (specify in Notes)							

What evidence is available to substantiate the student's language and communication mode is/are an effective means to support the student's access to information, people, and experiences across multiple environments? For example, assessments, observations, student/provider/caregiver input.

How does the student communicate with family members? What support is needed to increase the proficiency of family members in communicating with the student?

SERVICES, HEARING TECHNOLOGY, & VISUAL/AUDITORY ACCOMMODATIONS¹

Services:

What services are needed for the student to access the curriculum and educational environment?

- ☐ Captioning Services (e.g., [CART](#))
 ☐ [Qualified Interpreter](#)
☐ Speech Language Therapy
☐ Notetaker
 ☐ Teacher of the Deaf
 ☐ Audiology Services
☐ [Intervener](#)²
☐ Teacher of the Deafblind²
☐ Other

Action Plan (for each box checked, specify the service, frequency, and provider):

Hearing Technology:

Check all that apply if the student uses one or more of the following at school and/or at home:

Technology:	Sometimes at School:	Consistently at School:	Sometimes at Home:	Consistently at Home:
Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom Amplification System	☐	☐		
Cochlear Implant (CI)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication Device	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearing Aid(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Student's level of independence using hearing technology:

- ☐ Highly Dependent
 ☐ Some Physical Assistance
 ☐ Some Prompting
 ☐ Independent

Action Plan (also include plan for [monitoring hearing technology](#), if any):

Visual / Auditory Accommodations:

What accommodations are needed to support the student's communication in their school environment?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Strategic seating | ☐ Limit visual obstructions |
| ☐ Special lighting | ☐ Captioned media |
| ☐ Limit noise distractions | ☐ Visual alerts & alarms (e.g., for an emergency) |
| ☐ Tactile alerts | ☐ Obtain student's attention before giving instruction |
| ☐ Large print | ☐ Enhance lip-reading (clear masks, trim moustache, etc.) |

☐ Other:

Action Plan (for each service checked, specify who will initiate/provide the accommodation):

"The school must honor the individual's choice unless the school can prove that an alternative auxiliary aid or service provides communication that is as effective as that provided to students without disabilities and affords an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the service, program, or activity" (DOJ-DOE FAQ, p. 9).

Are the aids/services provided primarily based on the preference of the student with disabilities?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comments:

EXPANDED SUPPORT SERVICES*

The team has considered the following:

☐ Opportunities for Direct Communication* with peers.

Describe Opportunities:

☐ Opportunities for Direct Communication* with staff and other school personnel.

Describe Opportunities:

☐ Opportunities for Direct Instruction*.

Describe Opportunities:

CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION ACCESS¹

Academic instruction, school services, lunchtime, and extracurricular activities in which the student participates have been identified and will be presented with communication as effective as what peers receive. Consider the full school day.

Various school settings considered:

Action Plan(s):

Has the team considered how the student will be alerted in the event of a school emergency?

This section is intended to document how the student will access alerts from the school that notify students and staff that an emergency is occurring (e.g., via a visual notifications or alarm system). It does not require the team to develop a separate emergency response protocol.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Action Plan:

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) CONSIDERATIONS²

When determining placement, was an accurate and complete explanation of the continuum of educational placement options provided and considered based on the student's individual communication and LRE needs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Language, communication, inclusivity and other issues considered related to LRE:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

American Sign Language (ASL) – A visual language used by people who are deaf and hard of hearing in the United States and Canada. ASL is a language distinct from English.

Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) - A type of hearing aid which uses bone conduction of sound to deliver better hearing. BAHAs are primarily used for people who have conductive hearing losses and people with single-sided deafness (unilateral hearing loss).



Captioned Media – Films, DVDs, online videos, etc. that have the spoken word or the visual intent of the media represented by text displayed on the screen as it is occurring.

CART – (Communication Access Realtime Translation) The simultaneous verbatim translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real time software, which displays the text on a laptop computer, monitor or screen. CART service is often provided in classroom settings for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Classroom Amplification Systems – An environmental amplification system that utilizes a portable speaker system or placing a loudspeaker on one or more walls and/or ceiling. This type of system ensures that that speech signal is evenly distributed throughout the classroom with the end goal of improving the signal to noise ratio for each student in the room.

Cochlear Implant - A surgically implanted electronic device that stimulates the auditory nerve through electrodes placed in the cochlea of the inner ear, allowing some people who are deaf or hard of hearing to perceive sounds.



Communication Device - A physical object or device used to transmit or receive messages. Communication devices can range from paper and pencil to communication books or boards to apps and devices that produce voice output and/or written output.

Communication Mode – The medium or channel in which communicative intent is expressed and is received.

Hearing Aids – small electronic device worn in or behind one's ear. It makes some sounds louder so that a person with hearing loss can listen, communicate, and participate more fully in daily activities.



Expressive Communication (Exp.)- The process of expressing oneself (e.g., needs, wants, feelings, opinions) to others through verbal and nonverbal communication.

Fingerspelling - The representation of the alphabet by finger positions in order to spell out individual words or connected/longer strings of language.

Gestures – Movements of any part of the body to express or emphasize an idea, an emotion or a function. Not part of a formal communication system.

Hearing Technology Monitoring – Checking the hearing aid on an on-going basis to determine that it is functioning properly.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) - Improves the signal-to-noise ratio for a student with hearing loss. Typically, the HAT works in conjunction with a student's personal hearing aid(s) or cochlear implant sound processor(s). There are also classroom HAT systems that may be recommended based on the age of the student and classroom set-up. HAT systems may include: remote microphone technology; frequency modulation (FM) systems; induction systems; infrared systems; special inputs for telephone, television or computers and amplified alarms and signals.

Intervener - An individual who is specially trained to provide clear and consistent sensory information to an individual who is deafblind. An intervener acts as the eyes and ears of the individual who is deaf-blind, making him or her aware of what is occurring in their environment and attaching language and meaning to all experiences.

Language – A system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves.

Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) – Using hearing and technology to listen and speak. LSL offers a set of strategies and principles to teach students with hearing loss to develop spoken language through listening.

No formal language - This describes students who have had such limited access to language that they have not developed formal language. This is not the same as students using a communication device.

Object/Picture System - Objects or pictures that are used as symbols for communication by individuals who are not able to communicate using more conventional symbol systems. These objects or pictures bear an obvious and concrete relationship to the visual or tactile properties of the entities that they represent.

Pidgin Signed English (PSE) - PSE is a combination of American Sign Language (ASL) and English. ASL is a distinct language, and (like most other languages) it does not map perfectly to English. There is no equivalent for many specific words and the syntax is completely different. Culturally Deaf people, signing with each other, usually use ASL, but many people, (frequently deaf or hard of hearing) who learn to sign later in life, after hearing and using spoken English, do not sign strictly in ASL. Instead, they use a mixture of ASL and English that is known as PSE. With PSE, someone might sign most of the English words of a sentence and use approximately the English syntax.

Qualified Interpreter - an interpreter who is able to interpret between two languages or communication modes effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. Must be qualified according to state or national standards.

Receptive Communication (Rec.) - The process of receiving and understanding a message/what others say or express.

Tactile Sign Language – A communication method based on a manual sign language or system in which the receiver's hand(s) is placed lightly upon the hand(s) of the signer to perceive the signs for learners who are deaf-blind.

Touch Cues - A touch made in a consistent manner directly on the body to communicate with a child.