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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - INSTRUCTION FOR DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING  
STUDENTS

Introduced By: Representatives Handy, Nardolillo, Naughton, Ajello, and Ackerman

Date Introduced: March 23, 2016

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-25.2-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-25.2 entitled  
2 "Instruction for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island  
3 Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-25.2-3. Assessment.** -- (a) The Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary  
5 education (hereinafter referred to in this chapter as "the department") shall ensure that  
6 appropriate language assessments and standardized norms are used for the purpose of monitoring  
7 and tracking language developmental milestones in both expressive and receptive language  
8 acquisition and developmental stages toward American Sign Language (ASL) and English  
9 literacy for all deaf and hard-of-hearing children. For purposes of these considerations, language  
10 shall be considered the cognitive ability to learn and use systems of complex communication,  
11 separate from modality employed to communicate.

12 (b) Individuals involved in administering assessment tools to students who are deaf or  
13 hard of hearing shall be proficient in ~~the student's primary communication mode, style, or~~  
14 ~~language as determined by a language assessment~~ American Sign Language and English  
15 consistent with the requirements of § 16-25.2-2. All assessments shall be delivered in ~~the~~  
16 ~~student's primary communication mode, style, or language as determined by a language~~  
17 ~~assessment~~ American Sign Language and English consistent with the requirements of § 16-25.2-  
18 2, shall have been validated for the specific purposes for which they are used, and shall be

1 appropriately normed.

2 (c) Language benchmarks must provide annual data and tracking that informs as to the  
3 individual child's receptive and expressive language and cognitive abilities comparative to the  
4 child's linguistically age-appropriate peers who are not deaf or hard-of-hearing, using the ASL  
5 and/or English in order to be school-ready.

6 (d) Model language developmental milestones shall be chosen from existing standardized  
7 norms and shall be selected by a working group and/or an advisory committee of the Rhode  
8 Island department of elementary and secondary education as defined in §§16-25.2-3.1(a) and (b).  
9 These model language developmental milestones chosen by the individualized education  
10 programs (IEP), the 504 Plan (504), or individual family service plans (IFSP) as regulated by the  
11 department of human services team in assessing the progress of the child's language development  
12 in both languages of American Sign Language and English. For purposes of this section, English  
13 includes spoken English, written English, or English with the use of visual supplements.

14 (e) All results shall be shared with parents in an accessible language.

15 (f) If a deaf or hard-of-hearing child does not demonstrate progress in age-appropriate  
16 expressive and receptive language skills, as measured by the educator toll developed pursuant to  
17 §16-25.2-3.1, the language developmental milestones shall be disseminated to the child's IEP,  
18 504, or IFSP team, including parents and guardians of the deaf or hard-of-hearing child, along  
19 with materials and training to ensure appropriate language growth remains a priority and  
20 continues to be monitored annually in the child's IEP, 504, or IFSP.

21 (g) IEP, 504, or IFSP must include as much detail as possible to explain the lack of such  
22 skills and make specific recommendations as to what strategies, services, and programs will be  
23 available to assist the child in becoming linguistically ready for kindergarten and/or linguistically  
24 age-appropriate. These recommendations shall be part of the child's IEP, 504 plans, or IFSP and  
25 in developing the child's educational plans.

26 (h) The department, with the assistance of a workgroup as defined in §16-25.2-3.1 shall  
27 develop specific plans and regulations by July 1, 2018, to fully implement this language  
28 assessment program.

29 SECTION 2. Chapter 16-25.2 of the General Laws entitled "Instruction for the Deaf and  
30 Hard-of-Hearing Students" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

31 **16-25.2-3.1. Implementation.** -- (a) On or before January 1, 2017, the department shall  
32 establish a workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to develop the following by July 1,  
33 2018:

34 (1) Standards for language development milestones;

- 1 (2) Methods for monitoring and reporting children’s development related to the  
2 milestones;
- 3 (3) Selecting evidence-based assessment tools and the required skills necessary to deliver  
4 the assessments;
- 5 (4) Methods for delivering the student assessment results to students, parents, teachers,  
6 administrators and others as deemed appropriate;
- 7 (5) Methods to deliver aggregated data to stakeholders, schools and Rhode Island  
8 department of education, for examining areas of training and service delivery improvement;
- 9 (6) Methods of communicating the milestones, assessment tools and student progress  
10 monitoring to students, parents, and educators; and
- 11 (7) Permanent advisory council to oversee the “language assessment” program effective  
12 January 1, 2018;
- 13 (i) The workgroup will be composed of up to seven (7) members, appointed by the Rhode  
14 Island department of elementary and secondary education and RI commission on the deaf and  
15 hard-of-hearing, who possess the following characteristics:
- 16 (A) Open to different perspectives;
- 17 (B) Willing to engage in research and investigation;
- 18 (C) Willing to consider the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students from all education  
19 settings;
- 20 (D) Committed to working on an aggressive timeline to produce clear and implementable  
21 recommendations; and
- 22 (E) Sensitive toward multi-cultural and socio-economic factors;
- 23 (ii) Workgroup characteristics would include members who:
- 24 (A) Understand child development;
- 25 (B) Understands how American Sign Language (ASL) and English language develops in  
26 deaf and hard-of-hearing children;
- 27 (C) Are knowledgeable about assessments and assessment administration works for this  
28 population;
- 29 (D) Are knowledgeable about deaf culture and community values;
- 30 (E) Are knowledgeable about how schools typically operate and how services are best  
31 provided to children in various education settings;
- 32 (F) Are knowledgeable about early intervention and early childhood education; and
- 33 (G) Are knowledgeable about family engagement.
- 34 (b) Commencing on or before July 31, 2019, and annually on or before each July 31

1 thereafter, the department shall annually produce a report, using the existing data reported in  
2 compliance with the federally required state performance plan on pupils with disabilities, that is  
3 specific to language and literacy development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children from birth to  
4 eight (8) years of age, inclusive, including those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and have other  
5 disabilities, relative to their peers who are not deaf or hard-of-hearing. The department shall make  
6 this report available on its Internet website.

7 (c) All activities of the department in implementing this section shall be consistent with  
8 federal law regarding education of children with disabilities and federal law regarding the privacy  
9 of pupil information.

10 (d) The department shall, on or before January 1, 2018, develop specific action plans and  
11 regulations to fully implement this section.

12 (e) For the purpose of this section, the term "language developmental milestones" means  
13 milestones of development aligned with the existing state instrument used to meet the  
14 requirements of federal law for the assessment of children from birth to eight (8) years of age,  
15 inclusive.

16 (f) This section shall apply to children from birth to ten (10) years of age, inclusive. After  
17 eight (8) years of age, the assessment shall be conducted every three (3) years until graduation.

18 SECTION 3. Chapter 23-13 of the General Laws entitled "Maternal and Child Health  
19 Services for Children with Special Health Care Needs" is hereby amended by adding thereto the  
20 following section:

21 **23-13-27. Assessment for deaf and hard-of-hearing language development. --**

22 (a) The Rhode Island department of human services, with assistance of the Rhode Island  
23 department of elementary and secondary education, shall develop language assessments to  
24 monitor deaf and hard-of-hearing children's language developmental milestones in American  
25 Sign Language (ASL) and English literacy and, if applicable, spoken English and visual  
26 supplements. Language developmental milestones must include data and tracking that provides  
27 information as to the individual child's receptive and expressive language comparative to the  
28 child's age and cognitive abilities using ASL and/or English in order to be school-ready.

29 (b) Model language developmental milestones shall be chosen from existing standardized  
30 norms and shall be selected by a working group and/or an advisory committee of the Rhode  
31 Island department of elementary and secondary education as defined in §§16-25.2-3.1(a) and (b).  
32 These model language developmental milestones chosen by the individualized education  
33 programs (IEP), the 504 Plan (504), or individual family service plans (IFSP) as regulated by the  
34 department of human services team in assessing the progress of the child's language development

1 in both languages of American Sign Language and English. For purposes of this section, English  
2 includes spoken English, written English, or English with the use of visual supplements.

3 (c) All results shall be shared with parents in an accessible language.

4 (d) If a deaf or hard-of-hearing child does not demonstrate progress in age-appropriate  
5 expressive and receptive language skills, as measured by the educator toll developed pursuant to  
6 §16-25.2-3.1, the language developmental milestones shall be disseminated to the child's IEP,  
7 504, or IFSP team, including parents and guardians of the deaf or hard-of-hearing child, along  
8 with materials and training to ensure appropriate language growth remains a priority and  
9 continues to be monitored annually in the child's IEP, 504, or IFSP.

10 (e) IEP, 504, or IFSP must include as much detail as possible to explain the lack of such  
11 skills and make specific recommendations as to what strategies, services, and programs will be  
12 available to assist the child in becoming linguistically ready for kindergarten and/or linguistically  
13 age-appropriate. These recommendations shall be part of the child's IEP, 504 plans, or IFSP in  
14 developing the child's educational plans.

15 (f) The Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education with the  
16 assistance of a workgroup as defined in §16-25.2-3.1 shall develop specific plans and regulations  
17 by July 1, 2018, to fully implement this language assessment program.

18 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - INSTRUCTION FOR DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING  
STUDENTS

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1           This act would direct that the Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary  
2 education ensure that appropriate language assessments and standardized norms are used for the  
3 purpose of monitoring and tracking language developmental milestones in both expressive and  
4 receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward American Sign Language (ASL)  
5 and English literacy for all deaf and hard of hearing children.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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