



[HF 604](#) – Deaf Children, Language and Literacy Development (LSB1776HV.1)
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Fiscal Note Version – Final Action

Description

[House File 604](#) directs the Department of Education (DE) to work with the Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD), Area Education Agencies (AEAs), school districts, and the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program (EHDI) in the Department of Public Health (DPH) to coordinate, develop, and disseminate resources to parents and educators. The resources will include information on deaf and hard-of-hearing children’s expressive and receptive language acquisition and development. The DE, in consultation with the ISD, AEAs, school districts, and the EHDI, will select existing tools or assessments that may be used by qualified educators to assess American Sign Language (ASL) and English language and literacy development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children from birth through eight years of age.

The Bill directs the DE to develop guidelines for a comprehensive family support mentoring program that meets the language and communication needs of families. The mentoring program will be coordinated between the DE, the EHDI, the ISD, and the AEAs. The mentoring program requirements are detailed in the Bill and are subject to appropriation.

The DE is required to publish an annual report regarding language and literacy development for deaf and hard-of-hearing children from birth through eight years of age.

Background

Deaf or hard-of-hearing children and students are covered under the federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), which defines and regulates special education. Iowa’s AEAs are responsible for administration of the [Early ACCESS](#) program, which provides services for infants and toddlers covered under IDEA Part C. Early ACCESS provides early intervention services for children from birth through age two who have a health or physical condition that may affect their growth and development or who have developmental delays. The services provided to a child covered under IDEA Part C are detailed in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and the plan is reviewed every six months to determine whether updates are needed. Under IDEA Part B, public schools are required to provide special education to students ages 3 to 21 who meet specified criteria. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) detail how the school will support students needing special education.

In Iowa, deaf or hard-of-hearing students have options for what setting would best serve their educational needs. The ISD operates under the Board of Regents to provide educational services to deaf or hard-of-hearing students from preschool through age 21. The school is located in Council Bluffs. The ISD provides on-site direct instruction to students and has maintained a steady enrollment of about 110 students on campus. The ISD also offers online sign language development courses for students, parents, and school staff. The AEAs provide educational support for deaf and hard-of-hearing students attending other schools across the State.

The DE issued a [report](#) in January 2018 to provide information regarding students who were deaf or hard-of-hearing in Iowa for the 2016-2017 school year. The report identified 2,775 Iowa students ranging from birth to age 21 who were deaf or hard-of-hearing. The report details student demographics, school district assessment data, and proficiency levels for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) is a nationwide initiative to raise awareness of deaf or hard-of-hearing children's experiences in language learning and to work toward school readiness and sufficient language skills by promoting state legislation that allows deaf children to have access to both ASL and English. This Bill is similar to versions of proposed LEAD-K legislation that have passed in California, Hawaii, Kansas, Oregon, South Dakota, Georgia, and Louisiana.

Assumptions

- The DE anticipates that meeting the requirements of this Bill will have no fiscal impact.
- The ISD will require 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) position for a Family Support Coordinator. There will be additional costs for time and travel reimbursement for family support mentors.
- The DPH will require a part-time Program Planner 2 position. There will be additional costs for time and travel reimbursement for family support mentors, interpreters, background checks, and training.

Fiscal Impact

Currently, the fiscal impact of House File 604 is contingent upon future legislative action, as the Bill is subject to appropriation. The cost to the ISD for establishment and ongoing costs of the Family Mentoring Program is estimated at \$300,000. The cost to the DPH for establishment and ongoing costs of the Family Mentoring Program is estimated at \$80,000.

Sources

Department of Education
Department of Public Health
Iowa School for the Deaf

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

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The fiscal note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to [Joint Rule 17](#) and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this fiscal note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.

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