TEXAS DEAFBLIND PROJECT

Teacher of Students who are Deafblind Proposed Model in Texas

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Overview

The EC-12 Teacher of Students who are Deafblind (TDB) is a new certification in Texas. Texas is the second state in the United States to offer this certification, second only to Utah. Due to the size discrepancy between the two states with certified TDBs, the employment and service delivery models differ significantly to meet the needs of all 932 deafblind students across Texas.

The Proposed Model

In Texas, we have 53 Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPDs) spread out all over the state. Those RDSPDs each hold Shared Service Arrangements (SSAs) with neighboring, and usually smaller, districts to ensure that all students who are Deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) in Texas can have access to a continuum of services, even if they are the only DHH child in their small school district. While SSA member districts are typically public schools, charter schools can also be members and private schools can participate as non-members. It is recommended that Texas utilize the already established and effective RDSPD model to support students who are deafblind by hiring the position of TDB on their RDSPD staff, as well as include access to the TDB into each of their SSAs. This would allow every child in the state of Texas to access highly qualified staff for both direct and consult services in the area of deafblind education.

Funding the Model

RDSPDs already have a funding structure in place that can support this model. RDSPDs receive funding from a few places, including IDEA-B Discretionary Deaf Funds. These funds outline that each student being served by the RDSPD ages 3-21 generates money each year based on a formula. The 2025-2026 Special Education

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Consolidated Grant Application (federal) Program Guidelines outline allowable and unallowable payroll costs. Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) is listed as an allowable position, with appropriate justification, and Teacher of Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (TDHH) is an allowable position. TDBs serve in a dual role. They are either TVI/TDBs or TDHH/TDBs. These guidelines would allow for a TDB with either a TDHH or a TVI background and dual role to be paid with IDEA-B Discretionary Deaf funding. Another role that is allowable with IDEA-B Discretionary Deaf funding is Deafblind Intervener. This is another way to ensure access to qualified staff for students who are deafblind. The program guidelines note that the allowable and unallowable "chart is not intended to be all-inclusive, but is designed to provide examples". This implies that TDBs would fall under the allowable or allowable with appropriate justification category.

RDSPDs also receive funding as outlined in TEC 48.315 which brings a more standardized method of funding than was previously used. Students being served by RDSPDs for at least 45 minutes a week will generate funding of at least $6,925 per student each year in addition to the IDEA-B Discretionary funds noted above.

There are some funding sources that vary in each RDSPD depending on how the SSAs are drawn up with their member districts. If explicitly included in the SSA, the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding for students who are physically attending the RDSPD instead of their home district, can also be included in the funding amount going to the RDSPD. TEA noted for fiscal year 2025 the average total local and state Foundation School Program for ADA funds as $13,405 per student. RDSPD Tuition rates are determined by the individual RDSPDs and can vary wildly. Member districts pay a tuition for the students in their home districts to receive services provided by RDSPD staff, whether in their home district or at an RDSPD cluster site location. This can be anywhere from $1,000 to $75,000 per student, depending on SSA. Depending on the SSA, some RDSPDs also collect an annual membership fee from member districts.

RDSPD staff can obtain TDB training and certification without taking on additional cost by utilizing the Deafblind Graduate Certificate Grant Initiative. (Grant info here once we have it. Waiting on several questions to be answered by NT)

Summary

It is recommended that all 53 RDSPDs in the state of Texas employ certified and qualified TDBs, and build their services and support into their SSAs with all of their member districts. Texas can support the 898 deafblind students through the existing RDSPD model and bring qualified staff and programming to every child.

If anyone has any questions, feel free to contact the Texas Deafblind Project at txdeafblindproject@tsbvi.edu.

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