

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Date: February 27, 2020

Source of Report: LD 642, An Act Regarding Kindergarten Readiness for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Interim Report

Topic: Kindergarten Readiness

Context

LD 642, or Public Law 429, requires the convening of a Task Force to develop procedures for developing a language monitoring program for young children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing so that the children will have language skills to participate effectively in Kindergarten. The procedures will be designed to assess, monitor, and track language development milestones in American Sign Language and in Spoken English.

The Department is required to submit an interim report at this time and a final report in January 2021. The final report will include the identified parent resource portfolio and procedures to disseminate the portfolio, a procedure to disseminate recommended assessment tools to local providers of language development services, and a procedure to address lack of progress in expressive and receptive language skills – in either American Sign Language or Spoken English or both - as measured by the recommended assessment tools.

Actions

The Department identified and convened the Task Force. The Department invited the following stakeholder groups to submit nominations of individuals to serve on the Task Force: Maine Hands and Voices, Hear ME Now, MADSEC, Division of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened – BRS/DVR, Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH), Maine Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the Maine Newborn Hearing Advisory Board.

Eleven people were invited to participate on the Task Force, and they represent a balance among professionals and parents. They also represent perspectives on the use of American Sign Language, Spoken English, or both language systems, as required by statute. The Task Force held its first largely organizational meeting on December 20, 2019. The Department engaged Carole Martin as the facilitator of the Task Force. Ms. Martin guided the Task Force through a process of identifying information needed for its work and organizing next steps at that December meeting.

The Task Force meeting scheduled for February 6, 2020 was rescheduled to February 27, 2020 due to inclement weather. On February 27, 2020, the Task Force began to examine information about language assessment and monitoring procedures that are used in other states. The Task Force received a presentation from Julie Rems-Smario of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit in

the California Department of Education. Members also received links to databases of similar Legislation in other states and agreed to read reports from two states: Louisiana and California.

At the February 27, 2020 meeting Roy Fowler, Coordinator of Child Development Services, also discussed data collection and current practices regarding assessing and monitoring language and other factors of development among children who participate in CDS programs or services. Currently, the Department and CDS do not require the use of a specific screening instrument either in preschool programs or for Kindergarten screening. Schools in Maine are required to administer a statewide assessment in third grade; that is the youngest age at which a cohort of students is assessed.

The next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for March 12, 2020. At that meeting the members of the Task Force will review and discuss the work completed in other states and thus conclude the information-gathering work of the Task Force. Subsequent meetings will involve deciding on recommended screening instruments and ways to disseminate information about developmental milestones. The Task Force will also agree upon recommended new data collection and reporting procedures. The members of the Task Force anticipate holding an information and listening session with stakeholder families once decisions about developmental milestones and screening materials are close to being finalized.

Task Force Members

Dr. Katherine Duncan	Pediatric Audiologist
Darlene Freeman	Parent
Karen Hopkins	Director of Statewide Education and Family Services Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Cathy Janelle	Speech Language Pathologist, Listening & Spoken Language Specialist
Elizabeth King	Special Education Administrator
Catherine Lushman	Teacher of the Deaf
Carrie Pierce	Teacher of the Deaf and American Sign Language Instructor
Dr. Jane Puhlman	Faculty in Communication Sciences and Disorders, The University of Maine
Elizabeth Seal	Parent and ASL instructor
Katelyn Spaulding	Teacher of the Deaf
Dr. Regan Thibodeau	Faculty, Department of Linguistics, University of Southern Maine

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